

The Viking Archer

by Fusion Palace

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Summary: Just before her wedding with Douglas Macintosh is about to begin, Merida discovers that she was a ransom baby - snatched from her parents just after her birth during a vicious war between the Vikings and Celts. Desperate to avoid the marriage she went through to make her mother happy and bring peace to her kingdom, Merida journeys to Berk to reunite with her true family. (Spoilers)

1. Disturbing Truths

_A/N: I haven't read any good 'Hiccup has a sister' stories on this fandom, so I thought after tirelessly searching for one - hey, why not write one myself? So here ya' go. Also, there's a twist!
;)_

_Disclaimer: I do not own the How to Train Your Dragon movie franchise or anything associated with it, Dreamworks does. Also, I do not make a profit by writing this. I also do not own Brave - only Pixar and Disney do. *sighs* _

_ATTENTION: Sorry there was a glitch last time, I write all of my stories on my Wattpad account (FusionPalace111) first, and I usually use the copy/paste system with Documents then I publish. Sorry for the inconvenience! _

**Chapter 01 - Disturbing Truths **

'Oh, darling. You look absolutely beautiful,' Queen Elinor of DunBroch gasped, as she gazed at her daughter dressed in a gorgeous, traditional Celtic wedding gown.

'Thank you, mother. I am...very happy.' Merida carefully replied. Ever since what the family dubbed as 'the bear incident' went through, she now reluctantly agreed to whatever her mother had said...after all, she had nearly lost her through her own selfishness and defiance. She couldn't go through the same traumatic experience

again, or Merida was certain she'd never forgive herself.

The queen had assumed that her daughter was merely nervous, and also was not the sort of person to enjoy formal occasions. After all, Merida had agreed to marry a beneficial suitor - Douglas Macintosh, who was the younger brother of the leader's heir. Merida had been presented to during the Highland Games which had occurred a few years ago. She knew she had to go through an allied wedding, or the clans would grow impatient once more and declare war - the kingdom would fall, to chaos and ruin, just as Merida's mother had warned.

'I'll go get your father, darling. Just wait here,' Queen Elinor told her daughter, who quickly obeyed the request. Once the queen had left and shut the door, Merida was left standing in the preparation room. Now, she was able to cry - if anyone got suspicious, she'd just tell them they were 'tears of joy'.

She had to sacrifice her happiness and freedom for her people.

Tears fell from her eyes and left tracks down her cheeks. Merida choked back strangled sobs, for she did not wish for anyone to hear her despair and get suspicious or ask any questions. She sighed when she glanced around the room, and spotted her reflection. She looked just as she had at the Highland Games, except her dress was white to represent purity and innocence - the exact opposite of her true personality. She studied the room, and drank in every detail as she had done with all of the others inside the castle of DunBroch, for Merida knew that she might not ever come back.

Suddenly, her muffled sobs stopped, when her curious eyes spotted a chest draped in old cloths and blankets - it was covered in dust. This room was locked entirely until a royal wedding occurred, and considering how rare those occasions were, Merida was sure that the objects in here were very important to her parents. So, she raised herself from her pitiful, defeated position upon the floor and dragged her feet towards the wooden, seemingly simple chest. Merida held her breath when her shaky hands went to open it, and a small, genuine smile graced her lips for the first time in months.

She looked inside the chest, and only found a letter that had been opened, with the blood-red seal still intact. And when she read the contents of the letter, she knew she could not go through with the wedding.

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When the door opened, Merida quickly gathered herself and glared at her surprised mother.

'Merida, what on earth are you - oh, god! I...I,' the Queen faltered when her eyes trailed from the letter in a furious Merida's hands to the once forgotten chest that stood with its lid flung open, the dusty curtains and cloths had fallen around it in a pile of material.

'You...you_ liar!_ I hate you, I hate you, I hate you I - w - what conceived you to even _do_ such a thing?' Merida thundered, drawing herself to her full height. Her fists were balled tight, knuckles red raw. Her cheeks had tinged as bright as her hair, and her eyes screamed murder.

'Merida, I can explain. It's not our fault...we were, at war with the Vikings. One of the soldiers that had infiltrated a land had captured one of the Viking leader's newborn babies, and suggested to Fergus that it be used as a ransom for surrender. But everything went wrong, and we...we couldn't have any children at the time. For years I believed myself to be barren after a childhood incident before the triplets were born, we were so desperate Merida.' The Queen sobbed, anguished for her family, her adoptive daughter and the entire kingdom - for surely, Merida had no reason to wed now. But Elinor was sure Merida loved Douglas...she had to! What about their various trips? The love sappy love letters? It was...something Merida would never in her right mind do.

Of course, she did it for me.

'So...I'm a Viking?' Merida whispered, her face ashen.

'Yes. Your father is Stoic the Vast, a warrior and Chief of a distant land named Berk - your mother is his wife, Valka. They have a son, Hiccup - he is your older brother.' The Queen revealed with a pained expression.

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_Author's Note: So, what are your thoughts? Please, review and let me know! *nods* _

2. Runaway Bride

Author's Note: Updates every Friday, remember that! I've got the entire story vaguely planned, so I shouldn't come across huge obstacles concerning writer's block. I'd love some feedback on the story! Thank you to those who informed me of the glitch in the last chapter. :)

Disclaimer: I do not own the How to Train Your Dragon franchise nor the movie Brave.

Chapter 02: Runaway Bride

Merida walked down the isle, consumed with confusion, grief and anger. Her parents (or should she even call them that?) had lied to her, deceived her and completely broke her trust in them. After everything we've been through together...why didn't they tell me the truth? I ought to know! Merida thought, fingers wound tight around a bunch of flowers.

She reached the altar and felt sick inside. Poor, poor Douglas - he would be humiliated within seconds. When did he deserve this? Merida did tolerate him. Douglas was a gentleman, he treated Merida with the utmost respect and dignity. For weeks, he had spoken of nothing but their future together, the joy their marriage would bring and the many heirs they would have.

'Do you Merida, take this man - Douglas, to be your beloved husband?' The priest croaked, his voice cracked and wheezed.

'I - I...' Merida stuttered, frozen in place as she turned to the

guests of the wedding. 'I have to leave!' She cried suddenly. She sprinted towards the doors at the back, and covered her face to avoid the aghast expressions of the people inside the room. Before she could leave, a hand roughly grabbed Merida's arm.

'You will NOT humiliate this clan - my son is your husband! You are a DunBroch, a Princess - and it's time you started acting like one.' The usually hearty leader of the Macintosh clan with a sense of humour growled, his eyes glinted like a madman.

'I have not agreed for your son to be my husband. And I am neither a DunBroch nor a Princess - I am the daughter of Stoic the Vast and his wife Valka, leader of the Hairy Hooligans that dwell upon a land called Berk. I am a Viking! Now, unhand me you beast.'

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Hiccup Horrendous Haddock had a lot on his mind - for one, his father's recent death still plagued his mind, as did the reunion with his mother Valka. One parent gained, another lost - it was too much for Hiccup to bear. But there was a ray of hope amongst the darkness - Toothless was not alone in the world, not the last of his kind as many had previously presumed. The egg must be kept safe at all costs...yet another thing Hiccup worried about.

Here he was minding his own business, until he suddenly stops in his tracks - eyes wide.

Usually when he had a lot on his mind, Hiccup went on a flight with Toothless, but due to the discovery of the new egg, Toothless's presence would only plague Hiccup's mind with thoughts about it. So he went for a pleasant walk deep into the forest that served as an outline of the village Hiccup lived in.

There, lying down over a thick tree root was the figure of a girl - a woman, to be more precise. The wild, bright red tangle of hair and her graceful form slumped over the tree gave her gender away even from his distanced perspective.

Without a second thought, Hiccup rushed towards her. He brought himself to his knees to examine her, and jumped out of his skin with a surprised yell when the stranger actually moved.

'Wedding...ran. No - no food. Walking, for days and days and...urgh.' The woman forced herself to speak, which only made the situation worse, for she had begun to quietly sob and whimper as she clutched her stomach and groaned in pain.

'Hey, hey, hey! Look, I'll help you - I'll take you back to Berk. My name's Hiccup, don't worry. What's yours?' He assured, curious as to exactly who this strange woman garbed in a soiled wedding gown was.

'Merida, my name is Merida.' She gasped with all of the strength she could muster, until her eyes rolled into the back of her head and she went limp in Hiccup's arms.

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Author's Note: What do you think about the story? Review and tell

me, please. Constructive criticism is welcomed and appreciated!

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3. Into the Forest and Over the Highlands

Author's Note: Thanks to all of you who have so far given me support for the story - I'm glad you like it!

Disclaimer: I do not own How to Train Your Dragon or Brave - only Dreamworks, Pixar and Disney do.

**Chapter 03: Into the Forest and over the Highlands**

As Hiccup tried and failed to bring the girl to his village after various attempts, he desperately wished that he had actually brought Toothless with him - but it was not possible. For one, if he had gone on a flight that afternoon, then he would not have found the stranger in the first place. Secondly, if he returned to the village to fetch Toothless, then he might not know how to find her again, which would be terrible because without his assistance - she would surely not survive for long.

'Okay, upsy-daisy.' He grunted, as he used his final solution - Hiccup used a soft, flat stretch of bark to carry the woman to his home so she could receive medical help. He placed her form flat upon the naturally made stretcher-like object after some time, once he had caught his breath, Hiccup dragged the stretcher with both arms towards Berk.

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'Hiccup, where have you been? The others and I have been so worried these past few hours.' Valka gasped as she threw her arms into a bear hug around her son, who returned the gesture gratefully.

'Uh, mom. When I was out in the woods, there was a young woman. I found her barely alive, so I brought her here to get help.' Hiccup explained, he lead his mother by the hand into the front room - where a young woman was carefully placed along a stuffed couch covered with fur.

'Did she say anything? Was she concious?' Valka asked in a soft, gentle tone. She continued to stare, eyes focused on nothing but the frighteningly familiar young woman before her.

'Barely, I guess she's been travelling on her own for a long time. I could barely understand what she was saying, until I got to piece together the little bits of information on the way.' Hiccup informed, and continued.' She said she was in some sort of wedding - and I guess by her dress, she was the bride. Something must have caused her to run away from the event...she seemed very distressed. Oh yeah, her name's Merida.' He said, carefully waiting for some sort of reaction or order from his mother.

'It can't be...not possible...she's supposed to be dead - I'd - I'd recognize her anywhere.' Valka's voice was barely a whisper. Her hand shook as she brought it to her the woman's face, exactly as she had when she had first met Hiccup - she remembered the tiny, fragile babe with blue eyes and wisps of curly red hair. She couldn't hold it in

anymore, so she cried.

'Mom, what's wrong? W - why are you crying?' Hiccup blurted as he threw an arm across her mother's back. 'Hey, what's wrong?' He asked again.

'I should have told you, but after the death of your father - I didn't think you'd be able to handle this kind of information. She's not just any stranger, Hiccup. She's...she's...' Valka was breathing heavily, a panicked, wild expression had crossed her face.

'Who is she mom? Who is she?' Hiccup cried out, eyes wide. He hadn't expected this kind of reaction from his mother.

'You weren't an only child, Hiccup. You had a fraternal twin, a sister. She was taken from the Celts during a war we had with them twenty years ago - and I, I thought she had died after her kidnapping...this stranger, this woman is your sister. Merida Malicious Haddock.' Valka revealed.

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'Get back here you treacherous wench! I'll have your head displayed outside my castle - no filthy Viking escapes my clutches!' Lord Macintosh declared as Merida ran as fast as her legs could carry her to the castle stables where her noble steed, Angus was kept.

'Come on Angus, let's get out of here!' Merida ordered as she hurled herself onto the loyal shire horse that quickly went into a full gallop towards the Scottish moors and highlands. She gasped when a stream of arrows that belonged to the Macintosh clan had been directed straight towards her - many of the arrows had missed, but one had lodged itself into her right shoulder and another gave Merida a thin gash alongside her cheek, she cried in pain at the assault from the sea of arrows.

'Stop, don't hurt her - please!' Merida's heart ached when she heard the pleading voice of her mother, Elinor. She's not your mother, she lied to you, a voice pushed itself at the forefront of Merida's thoughts. She gritted her teeth, eyes ablaze with fury once more as she escaped the attack from the Macintosh clan - she noticed no arches from the Dingwall nor the McGuffin clans, and for that she was grateful. At least they were thinking things through and had been more hesitant than Lord Macintosh.

Merida did not look back, as she escaped the wedding and attack from the furious Macintosh clan. As she went further and further into the forest, Merida thought - I'm coming home mother, father, brother...

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Merida thanked her lucky stars that she wasn't a prim and proper lady. But if you were, none of this mess would have happened...she reminded herself, as Angus huffed and puffed into a trot, exhausted after the pair of them had escaped the dramatic finale to Merida's celtic wedding with her betrothed, Douglas.

Since she was old enough to take long rides on her own, the further Merida went, the more she learned with experience about the wild.

However during her journeys, she had always been prepared - the kitchen maids had always packed her food in case she got hungry, and Merida now did not have that luxury. But as a child, she did pick berries and were taught which foods in the woods were good or bad with her mother.

God, why do I still call her that? Merida mentally growled.

Merida's stomach made an 'un-lady like' noise, as if a small creature was inside her stomach. I'm hungry...I'd better find something to eat, Merida decided. She had not dis-mounted her horse Angus yet, just in case the Macintosh clan had gone further than she had expected and were on a wild hunt to assure her return.

But no matter how hard she concentrated on using the survival skills she had gained over the years, Merida had only so far found a fistfull of berries, which was dissapointing. She used her ears to listen to running water, but there was no sound even remotely like it, and Merida grew anxious. She'd be reaching the highlands soon...winter was coming, and she wanted to be prepared - the nearest kingdoms belonged to the Dingwall and Macintosh clans. If not them, then there were a clutch of Celtic allies kept in handy. Merida had a feeling that Lord Macintosh wouldn't give up so soon nor on his word to kill her - after all, she was a Viking, and the Vikings were one of the Celts' greatest enemies next to the Romans.

Merida ate the half of the berries and gave the rest to Angus, for they both needed their strength for the long journey ahead.

'What have I done? I've ruined everything - again.' Merida muttered under her breath. A tear slid down her cheek, as she thought of both of her families. Her poor parents - their lives might be in just as much danger as hers was, they could very easily be killed for treason or some other hogwash, the kingdoms despised Vikings - and the thought of a most treasured ally raising one right under their noses all along must have been unconceivable and a mortifying realisation. And the parents she had been kept from, her brother...would they welcome her, or scrutinise her Celtic upbringing?

Merida's mind was so clouded and full of thoughts that she hardly knew that any time had passed at all. She frowned at the darkening sky, and set Angus into a full gallop across the highlands. She was shivering, for Merida had left her cloak along with her bow and arrow inside the castle back in DunBroch. Soon enough, everything dawned on her...she had abandoned the family that had raised her and been through a lot with Merida (despite how she came to be a Princess of DunBroch, she was still grateful that they hadn't killed her and had taken her in as one of their own), she abandoned her kingdoms and former allies, she had abandoned her fiancée-would-have-been-husband-by-now (the poor sod must feel so humiliated now, Merida thought), and she had left with no plan of survival nor motivation either. It was a spur of the moment she now wished she had more time to consider - would she gain anything from this? There was now a slim chance of finding happiness, and Merida knew that now.

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Had it been days, weeks, months? Merida did not know. Her stomach was used to having a hearty meal fit for a Princess of her status (after

all, she was a Princess!), and so the berries hadn't filled her up for long. She had scavanged for food - even resorting to feeding herself and Angus field mice and birds. It was disgusting, but she had no choice or she'd starve. But it was nearing winter now, and Merida was tired - she had travelled endlessly in search of civilisation - but any kingdoms, villages or homes she had discovered so far were allied with the three Scottish clans.

'Thank heavens!' Merida mentally cheered, as she finally spotted a forest. The further she went in the presumed safe forest, Merida noted that her noble steed Angus was growing more and more anxious with every step of his heavy hoof. Suddenly, Merida was thrown back onto the dirt, as an unseen winged creature fled from a tree and scared away Angus.

'A-angus - come...back!' Merida's strangled scream called desperately. As she tried to support herself, Merida finally realized how weak she had become during her travels - with her horse Angus to support her, she hadn't needed much of her strength during her time in the highlands.

Now completely spent, Merida was motionless - draped along a gigantic tree root. She willed herself to sleep, but had noticed the presence of a person nearby. Who was this? An ally, an enemy? There was no fine line between the two of them now. She forced herself to speak, to explain herself - anything to get some help!

'Wedding...ran. No - no food. Walking, for days and days and...urgh.' Merida's stomach gave a lurch as she spoke. Everything was hurting to much! She was starved of food, with no energy left within her. As she looked up, she could see a boy that appeared to be about her own age stare back at her, flabbergasted - his skin was fair, with green eyes and dark hair. She wondered who he was.

'Hey, hey, hey! Look, I'll help you - I'll take you back to Berk. My name's Hiccup, don't worry. What's yours?' Hiccup as in, her brother Hiccup? Merida couldn't believe her luck! She had to say something before she left the conscious world around her.

'Merida, my name is Merida.' She gasped with all of the strength she could muster, until her head rolled into the back of her eyes and she went limp in Hiccup's arms.

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Author's Note: Dun, dun, dunnnn! What did you guys think? Review and let me know, please. Feedback is very much welcomed. As usual, updates will be every Friday or at an earlier date depending on my schedule.

****_Responses to Reviews_****

_AlexJD2:___ Thank you for telling me about the glitch - as I said in the PM, it took me a while to understand what on earth you were talking about. But yeah, I write my drafts on Wattpad because it's easier than uploading from Microsoft Word blah, blah, blah, blah. Also, I don't think Merida will know about the dragons just yet - so you'll have to wait and see! And yes, Vikings such as Astrid would of course react badly to Merida's upbringing._

_imaginationflies:___ My thoughts exactly! That's why I started this story, because I was frustrated that nobody had thought through some wild theory, that Merida and Hiccup could possibly, in some absolutely insane way be related - like the connection between Elsa, Anna and Rapunzel despite coming from seperate movies. And I'm glad to know that you liked it. :)_

_KazeChi:___ There you go! Merida's journey is explored during her revival to health. I hope you're satisfied with how it went - I know that I was when I finally finished it. And in the PM when you mentioned the Night Fury egg, that will be explained in time too - the pace can't be rushed in this story, first I have to explore the healing process between Valka, Hiccup and Merida. She'll have her dragon when she's adapting to the Viking world. _

_wavering shadow:___ Thank you very much! ^^ And yeah, I'll try and edit the documents and add spoiler warnings - thanks for the heads up! The Night Fury egg is my own addition to the story, but that will soon be explored once Merida and her biological family sort things out._

_RandominatorOwl:___ Updated! You sound so excited - I'm glad my story has that impact on people. What did you like about it exactly? :)_

4. Alfifa

_Author's Note:___ So sorry I haven't updated! I'll spit out two chapters as an apology gift - now stop pelting me with rotten fruit and go read the story please. ;)_

_Disclaimer:___ I do not own the How To Train Your Dragon franchise and the movie Brave - Dreamworks, Pixar and Disney do. I don't make a profit out of writing this. (Ha, I wish!)_

**Chapter 4: Alfifa **

'Merida, darling - wake up, please.' A warm, gentle voice coaxed her daughter with an air of obvious concern. _How_ _does she know my name?_ Merida mentally panicked at the prospect of someone knowing her identity - even worse and after all of her travelling, perhaps a member of the clans or one of their allies had found her and brought her back to her lands or a neighbouring kingdom.

'M - mother?' She croaked. Her voice showed obvious signs of dehydration - her entire throat felt dry and uncomfortable...had she been neglected by her captors? Merida wondered.

'I'm here darling, I'm right here.' After some time Merida's eyes were forced open, and the odd mix of shapes and colours merged into some kind of form she could finally decipher. She was lying down with her back, supported by a bundle of stuffed pillows that were the most comfortable things her painful and now crooked back (from all of those nights spent sleeping on rocks or against trees) had lain on after many merciless months. She still found herself (and grimaced when she saw it and recalled everything that had happened) dressed in her soiled wedding gown that promised a ruined beauty and when Merida looked in the mirror, she sighed - she looked an absolute wreck with a complexion of wax. Red, glassy eyes and dirty, grazed skin riddled

with cuts and bruises alongside sharp cheekbones to prove her lack of food was eminent.

She furrowed her brows as her eyes glazed across the unfamiliar room with unfamiliar faces. There was a woman she supposed was the nurse, the boy that had saved her and a stranger sitting beside her - the stranger puzzled her, for she had accepted the fact that Merida had called her mother.

'But, you're not my mother.' Merida replied. Her eyebrows rose dramatically, eyes filled with bafflement as she saw the woman falter, and her eyes glisten with unshed tears.

'A - apologies. I might as well get this done and over with and introduce everyone. Merida, this is Alof, the healer that's been treating you since you were found in the woods by my son Hiccup...I'm sure you remember him.' Valka introduced, Alof bowed in respect (Merida prayed the nurse had no idea that she was a noble of any sort, but she supposed her clothing had given it away immediately) and Hiccup just stood there, only stopping to stare at his sibling when he was caught by Merida.

'Valka, Hiccup? Am I actually having a hallucination now?' Merida asked. Mouth agape as she stared at the two people - her apparent family of flesh and blood who were merely inches away from her.

'Merida, do you...do you know about _us?_' Valka put a greater emphasis on the 'us', and gestured to herself, Hiccup and Merida with only her eyes.

'I only found out a few months ago - short story long, I had to marry someone I did not love so the clans wouldn't declare war and assume my kingdom, DunBroch was an unfaithful ally and was not to be trusted. On the wedding day I was very upset, because I had to go through with it and be a delicate wife that's only purpose was to produce heirs for the throne - of course I hated the prospect. So when I found a letter that described how I was taken from Berk during a war and was related to your family, it was my only chance to escape my dreaded fate - my mother found out that I knew, but she thought I'd go through the entire thing because it was too late.' Merida winced as she recalled all of the things she had said to the woman who had raised her into the strong warrior she was today (no matter how unintentional it was). 'But I sort of left halfway through the ceremony - right at the moment I was supposed to say 'I do' for my dramatic exit, and I left. Except Lord Macintosh tried to force me into the ceremony, but I managed to leave the Church - when I began to ride to the forest on Angus, I had the entire Macintosh clan after me with their weapons. A bow lodged itself into my arm here-' Merida pointed to the miniature, deep but healing wound that had left a permanent scar on her shoulder,' and got scratched by a few of them. I travelled to Berk, avoiding the allied kingdoms so my journey took months and, well here I am.' Merida motioned at her sickbed, relieved that she had finally got the thing that had been pressing down on her for so long off her chest at last.

'Oh, you poor thing. I know that it must be over-whelming for you and I should tell you this later, but the Vikings have spotted you being carried unconscious and barely alive by Hiccup into our home to be healed, so there's bound to be some curiosity about your identity,

and obviously-' Valka explained, hoping her daughter wasn't one to be emotionally invested in such situations. But such an occurrence could break even the toughest of spirits, and so Valka didn't want to pass her daughter as a silly maiden that had ran scared from a wedding, it had happened before every once in a while - had it not?

'They wouldn't welcome a Celt with open arms, even if I have pure Viking blood in my veins. I was brought up by them, raised into their traditions and culture. No fraternising with the enemy.' Merida interrupted, to indicate that she fully understood the situation she was in. God forbid if the villagers ever found out that she was a Celtic Princess out of all things, they should surely revolt and demand her to be banished or be deemed a bastard child of Stoic and Valka, which she wasn't - but still, she was a Celt and they were Vikings. Rules didn't matter when you were angry and had your arch nemesis on your doorstep, and Vikings weren't known for their common sense or rationality in general either if you put it into a wider context.

'So after a while we wracked our brains and thought up a plan. You can choose a Viking name, and live as a mute with our people after you've fully healed - after all, no matter how lovely your accent is, it doesn't change the fact that you were raised a Celt. Let the people get to know you, to trust you, and everything will fall into place.' Valka informed, her hand trembled as she grasped her daughter's pale one. 'Do you understand?' She asked.

'Uh, yes. About that, I don't exactly know many Viking names. Sure there were a few in the stories my parents told me as a child, but I don't know what they mean - names can oddly say a lot about a person, in public opinion.' Merida confessed, now wishing she actually listened to her mother during History classes instead of doodled on her parchment.

'Oh yes, names are important in Viking culture too. Merida is a Spanish name, but it would surely raise some questions - especially from those who remembered the days of our war with the Celts, and how a certain chief's daughter was stolen from her cradle by the enemy whilst her twin slept soundly beside her.' Valka pointed the situation at hand and shifted in her seat a bit. 'You'd have to have a new name, of course. How about the name Akleja? It's a type of flower.' Valka suggested, she and Hiccup chuckled when Merida stuck her tongue out and scrunched her nose up in distaste for the name.

'Okay, maybe not. Hey Merida, do you have a hobby you like or something?' Hiccup asked, speaking for once after his un-chararistic silence, usually he would be much more opinionated in such a situation - Valka credited it to the shock of it all, stunned into silence.

'I like archery.' Merida admitted, wearing a ghost of a smile upon her face. She recalled her care-free days out, of travelling the forest and highlands without fear of being captured or starvation, the days of freedom.

'Well how about Alfifa? It means archer girl.' Hiccup suggested, he smiled visibly when his sister reacted with enigmatic enthusiasm. She nodded her head fervently in approval.

'I like it, suits perfectly.' Merida repeated the names in various kinds of voices, reminding Hiccup of the times he spent impersonating people. 'Well, what to do now? I was hoping to meet Stoic when he comes back...have you told him?' Merida asked, itching to meet your father yet oblivious of the situation. She noticed that Valka and Hiccup's expressions of joy fell immediately.

'Oh, darling. You see, your father Stoic died not too long ago. He died in battle, saving your brother's life in the process,' Valka revealed, the tears she had kept at bay finally fell in silence as she watched her daughter's crestfallen face. Hiccup too, had on a pained expression as he recalled his father's recent death.

'H-he's dead? I haven't had a chance to...to...me - et h-him?' Merida hiccuped through her tears, whilst her mother and brother hugged her in sympathy. Suddenly, a crash and an audible growl from downstairs took Merida out of her stupor. 'What was that?' She gasped, voice raspy after her bout of tears and eminent crying - she did not spot her older brother wince, but she did hear him mutter something unintelligible.

'Oh, it's nothing. We have a pet dog that comes and goes all the time - I don't think you'll see him often, he likes the outdoors.' Hiccup explained, wide-eyed and frantic, he sighed in much relief when Merida accepted what he had told her without a trace of suspicion.

'I get it, back at the castle in DunBroch, my family kept three Irish Wolfhounds - you probably wouldn't know what they look like. They have black fur, are agile and energetic, so I'm used to unexplained loud noises like that, I'm used to it.' Merida confided with a smile and a twinkle of her eye as she remembered the three dogs - those thoughts immediately brought her to memories of her rebellious younger triplet brothers, Hamish, Hubert and Harris.

'Lovely. Now you rest up tonight dear, you've got a big day ahead of you tomorrow. I'll have our nurse give you a short check up in the morning, and then you can greet the villagers - remember darling, you're supposed to be a mute. Don't speak, because those Vikings can sniff out a Scottish accent a mile away.' Valka warned. She hugged her daughter before she left the room with the healer/local nurse, who had been sworn to an oath of secrecy.

'I'll stay with you.' Hiccup announced. He dragged his wooden chair closer to Merida's sick-bed. For a while, there had been a comfortable silence - until Merida asked;

'Hiccup, what was our father like?' Her eyes trailed from the ceiling to his face, and she regretted taking him off-guard.

'Dad? Well, he was brave, always thought of others, and was a great leader.' Hiccup replied, eagerly he went off into a world of memories he had shut out due to his grief over Stoic's death - how he had gone fishing with his father, the great tales Gobber had told him of Stoic's victorious battles, and much more. He stopped half way through a story, when he noticed his sister yawning as she snuggled into a pillow. Hiccup smiled as he watched her sleep, unaware that she dreamed of Queen Ellinor, a witch, the demon bear Mordru and an unforgettable curse.

****Responses to Reviews****

_wavering shadow:___ Well the English at one point were Vikings the same time the Scottish were prominent Celts, so think of the characters just living in Ancient Britain. It's so cool writing this story, because I've got Viking and Celtic ancestry (I'm Welsh) - I hope that explains the geography aspect! Thank you, it took me while finding a middle name - it's not as if I can stick Jane in or anything, is it? _

_Randominator Owl:___ Thank you! I think I actually read the same story as you, but I was dissapointed with how rushed the story seemed and that the author looked as if he/she has abandoned it - I could hardly find anything that didn't include the genre 'Romance' in the Crossover section, so I thought hey, why don't I write my own story? And if it gets a ton of reviews, then other people will try and use the same concept of my story but with their own unique spin of it - I was hoping for a chain reaction sort of thing. _

And thanks for the suggestions on what breed of dragon Merida should have when she gets her own.

5. The Hairy Hooligans

_Author's Note:___ Okay, here's chapter 5 as promised - I felt really bad for leaving the story for a while, but I was honestly busy with ALevel work to do!_

_Disclaimer:___ I do not own the How to Train Your Dragon franchise or the movie Brave. The companies Dreamworks, Disney and Pixar Studios do. I do not make a profit in writing this. (Ha, I wish!)_

****_Chapter 5 - The Hiary Hooligans_****

'So, you ready for this?' Hiccup asked his sister, as he and Meri - *cough* 'Alfifa' exited the sick room after she was checked over by the healer, who had declared that she was healthy enough to be up and about on her own by now - she only had some cuts and bruises that would heal in no time, she had informed.

Merida nodded eagerly, she was practicing her alias as a mute stranger, she did not want to let something slip on her first day out in Berk as 'Alfifa'. Her blue eyes drank everything in - Berk was unusual, but the strangest thing were it's numerous towering formations that scattered the land. Merida scratched it up to the fact that Berk bordered the island it shared with the Scottish and Welsh Celtic clans, but she noted that some lands she visited that were near water had none of these strange posts, just various scouts and watchmen that stood at the top of the royal castles.

'Okay, I've got to teach a class at the local school about dragons - so you can hang out with the gang, ah, here they are!' Hiccup responded with much ethusiasm. As he ran down a slope the pair had been walking down to greet his friends, Merida followed with her brows furrowed, thinking of what he had just said._ Dragons? _

'Hey Hiccup, is that the girl you found last week? She's hot.' Snotlout declared, he grabbed Merida's hand and kissed it. 'Charmed

to meet such a fine specimen...would you care for a date?' He asked, after releasing her hand he wiggled his eyebrows.

'Snotlout, seriously? You're disgusting.' Hiccup's expression turned sour as he witnessed the exchange, he had no way of saying 'hands off', unless people mistook it for him having romantic feelings towards his sister (and they had no clue about his family ties to her, so it would be gross for him to even think about.) 'Okay, we're getting off topic here. Guys, this is Alfifa. She's the mute I found last week.' Hiccup introduced. Merida waved, she had composed herself after Snotlout's flirtatious advances surprised her - she usually only got attention because she was a Princess, but obviously these people had no clue about her status until they were to be told about it. Merida had changed out of her wedding dress and had it folded in a locked up chest (ironically enough), she was now dressed in regular Viking garb and had her her left wild and unkempt.

'How do you know her name?' Tuffnut asked, as he eyed Hiccup and Merida with evident suspicion, as the others did too after his question.

'She can write, and yes - she is a Viking Noble. That's why she's allowed to stay with my mother and I, but we don't know how long she's going to be here, so we might as well make her as comfortable as possible,' Hiccup told the group, who all took this as a reasonable explanation as to why 'Alfifa' could communicate when she clearly was not capable of it merely through speech.

'How did she get here?' Ruffnut asked, she voiced the question that was on everyone's mind. Merida frowned, she hated it when people acted as though she weren't in their presence - it happened all the time at home with her mother Queen Ellinor, and more often than not the guests that regularly dined with the DunBroch royal family during negotiations King Fergus often had with their allies...who might as well be Merida's enemies now.

'Well, she wrote to explain that her village was raided by the Macintosh clan from Scotland, and so she fled - her status as a noble made her a target for them, and so she escaped and ended up here.' Hiccup explained the very fabricated lie he had created with his mother. Valka suggested a sympathy story and for bonus points, it could include Merida's so called home being raided by one of the Scottish clans for evidence - but Merida insisted that only the Macintosh clan be given a bad name, after all, they were the only group to attack the moment she left the altar. The Dingwall and McGuffin clans had not shot a single arrow at her person, surely she would have been killed had all three clans attacked Merida during her escape.

There was a collective murmur and various gasps of shock that could be heard from Hiccup's friends.

'That's awful, what happened to your relatives?' Astrid asked, she displayed a rare moment of emotional attachment to a person - after all, her deceased mother had been killed when she was younger by a Scottish enemy. But Astrid didn't like the fact that Alfifa was going to be almost constantly in such close proximity with her boyfriend though, but perhaps she was just being paranoid. After all, in such a situation someone such as Alfifa would have no time for romance..._would she?_

Merida's eyes flashed, displaying a mixture of sadness and regret, but also fear for what the clans would do to the people who had raised her for bringing up the daughter of a sworn arch enemy. She shrugged her shoulders, bit her lip and shook her head back and forth several times to tell them the truth - she didn't know, and it was worse wondering whether they had survived or not than being completely sure that they were dead, it gnawed at her insides more than anything - the gripping guilt she hadn't felt since 'the bear incident'.

'That's horrible.' Ruffnut mumbled, for once she nor her brother were able to joke about a serious situation. To lighten the mood and change the topic, Fishlegs declared;

'Hey guys, wanna ride?' He grinned widely, but the rest only glared in response. The twins each rolled their eyes alongside Astrid, Snotlout growled and made a face-palm and Hiccup looked just about ready to admonish something - all eyes however, turned to Merida when all they could see her do was gallop and lift both hands up and down at the same time to demonstrate an activity, finally something clicked inside Hiccup's head.

'Ah, yes, what Fishlegs here meant was whether anyone wanted to go horse-riding with him or not.' He put a greater emphasis on the word of the activity, and explained as if he were speaking to a group of children instead of full grown adults. Merida's eyebrows rose, and she gave her brother a pointed look as if to say, 'what was that about?'

'That's not what I mea-ngh!' Fishlegs blurted, until Snotlout elbowed him in the ribs.

Merida nodded with much enthusiasm at the suggestion, leaving the friends utterly bewildered at what to do...they couldn't ride horses. Well, Tuffnut had learnt a little including a couple of Vikings in the area, but due to the people's usage of boats as parts of their international raids more so than horses, they didn't have an expertise in the activity. Well, many of the older men were decent since it had been a required activity for land battles - but now they had dragons, there was no need to declare war unless someone attacked their land, after all, the Vikings of Berk now had dragons at their side!

'Well c'mon, the stables are that way.' Snotlout directed with confidence. But before Merida had even directed her eyes towards her desired location, she lifted her arms and made the gesture of doing archery. Hiccup ran towards Gobber's place before anyone could say something, he had to hide the dragons before Merida arrived.

...

'Gobber, I need your help!' Hiccup cried as he panted at the threshold of the workshop.

'What is it lad, did Toothless's harness come loose or something?' Gobber asked, as he kept hammering at a piece of metal. Once Hiccup had caught his breath, he reached his father's life-long friend and said;

'The girl, Merida -' he coughed,' Alfifa, she wants an arrow so she can do archery. She'll be here any minute, you've got to hide the dragons Gobber. She can't find out, not yet!' Hiccup explained breathlessly, eyes wide as he held a hand dramatically to his chest.

'Did you say what I thought you just said?' Gobber murmured, he eyed the son of his deceased friend and put down whatever he had been working on.

'W-what?' Hiccup breathed, stiff as a board.

'You said Merida, lad. The name of...never mind, forget I said anything.' Gobber turned back to hammering the metal he had been working on before he had been interrupted by the current Chief of Berk.

'Gobber, I know about my sister - and that girl apparently named Alfifa, she's Merida.' Hiccup revealed, unable to contain the life changing secret from his most trusted companion any longer.

'By the Valhar, we all thought she was dead! Hiccup, do you realise how important it is to tell everyone?' Gobber admonished, shocked further than the sentence he had previously said as he shook Hiccup with his artificial hand and his live one.

'No, no we can't tell anyone. She was raised by the Celts Gobber - Celts, our greatest enemy next to dragon catchers! You know as well as I do that people like Astrid, who have lost loved ones to wars with them, would never stand for this. Even if they find out Merida is the daughter of my parents and also their Chief's younger sister, they'd think she's a threat and have her banished - worse, killed even! You've got to promise me you won't tell anyone. I...I just got her back and I can't,' Hiccup sighed, and slumped down on a nearby table as he dropped his head in his hands.

'Hiccup my boy, I know this is hard for you - after all, Merida was, is my Goddaughter. And I-' Gobber began to speak, but was cut off by Hiccup's muffled gasp of;

'What?!'

'Aye, Stoic appointed me after the birth of you and your sister to become the Godfather of Merida. Yours was a friend who died a few years back, I'm not sure you'd remember him - you were little when he died.' Gobber revealed, he faced Hiccup, who had by now raised his head from his hands and gazed at his friend intently.

'So you won't tell?' Hiccup asked, but it was more of a pleased statement than a question, Hiccup knew he could count on Gobber.

'And they wondered why I was your dad's best mate...' Gobber chuckled to himself.

...

'Right this way, ma'm.' Snotlout declared, as he gave the door to Gobber's Workshop three sound knocks. Merida rolled her eyes at how

cheesy the lad was, but tolerated him. After all, she knew there were worse men out there - after all, she had experienced some of the less than pleasant ones...who was she to complain if this Snotlout guy was a little obnoxious?

Seconds later, Hiccup was at the door. 'Come on right in guys. Alfifa, Gobber here is an expert blacksmith and can make anything - from harnesses to weapons, go ahead and ask.' Hiccup introduced after the man that was behind him had appeared. Gobber gave his ex apprentice a questioning glance, when Merida used her arms to request a bow and arrow. The pointed look he gave Hiccup clearly said; we'll talk about this later.

'Ah, so you're a tough lass - aren't you? I don't meet many women that like archery, it'll be a pleasure to make such a fine weapon for you young lady.' Gobber replied, smiling, he hobbled over to where he usually made the things people asked for, already he was preparing the bow - the arrows would come later on in the creation.

'Let's leave him to work, Alfifa. You'll get your bow tomorrow when it's finished - first thing,' Hiccup confirmed, in response Merida grinned wildly and did a little dance in silent glee.

'Should I escort the lady home?' Snotlout offered his arm, he gave Merida a roughish grin, already he was about to launch into a grand speech about how amazing a Viking he was, until Hiccup interrupted Snotlout.

'Uh, Snotlout, don't you have to do something?' He asked, and gave his self-serving friend a pointed gaze.

'Good Valhar, I guess you're right Chief. Meet me later at the arena,' Snotlout called, already he was running to the direction of where the dragons were kept.

'Come on, Merida. Let's go back home.' Hiccup whispered into his sister's ear after he wrapped an arm around hers. He had no idea that a certain girlfriend had seen the entire thing and saw red...

...

_waveringshadow: Thanks! I'm also hoping to intergrate figures of popular legends into the story too. Wales was ironically known as 'the land of dragons' back then, and there's a red dragon on my country's flag - so you can see partially as to why I love the movie How To Train Your Dragon, and I've got Celtic ancestry so of course I loved Brave. _

_Yeah, Berk's basically meant to be Viking England, Brave is obviously set in Scotland - so Merida's journey would make more sense, and Wales in England's other neighbor, so I was just itching to include Wales somehow into my story. Random Fact: Did you know that JJR Tolkien's Elvish language is based of Welsh? _

6. Night Fury

_A/N: So here's chapter six of the Viking Archer. The story will gradually start to pick up from this point, and this is an important

chapter. _

_Disclaimer: I do not own the How To Train Your Dragon franchise or the movie Brave. _

Read and Review, please! I'd love to hear your opinions on the story. :)

****Chapter 6 -** Night Fury**

'Okay, you can do whatever you like here. I know you haven't been used to the house yet, since you were injured in your sick-room and everything, but now that you're better we can spend some more time with each-other,' Hiccup said as he allowed Merida to enter the house.

'That sounds great, Hiccup. I'm starving!' She stated loudly, immediately searching the house for food to eat. Soon enough, the smell of cooking engulfed her sense of smell and Merida sighed, delighted. She didn't think her mother Valka was the kind of woman who knew how to cook...she seemed more like her daughter in that sense.

'Hiccup, Merida, are you two home?' Valka called from the kitchen before her two children reached the threshold of the room.

'Yeah, mom. Merida met a couple of the Vikings today, she's a bit tired now - when's food ready?' Hiccup asked his mother, he leaned over the spit her mother was sitting by on a three legged stool.

'Oh, there was a hunting trip today and the men of the village offered some game they caught for us - they inquired upon Merida's health too. They didn't ask too many questions about her, which is a good start,' Valka revealed, she turned back to concentrate on turning the boar the Vikings had caught that afternoon.

'Did they use arrows? I can ask to join one of their hunting trips someday,' Merida asked, eyes alight with eagerness as she imagined how glorious it would be to hold her trademark weapon once more.

'Of course you can. One or two knuckleheads in the group may be a bit sore about a woman joining the hunting party, but they won't object - it's not entirely out of the question,' Valka replied, she turned back to face her children but still kept her right arm on the meal she was preparing. 'It's getting dark, if you're desperate to get your new bow and arrow then you'd better reach Gobber quickly.' She advised her youngest. Merida gave an excited squeak that was very uncharacteristic of her, her legs had Merida running out of the house like the wind and it took Hiccup a moment to realize she had already left.

'Uh, I'd better catch up to her before she gets lost in the village. Bye mom, see you!' Hiccup murmured and then went to run after his younger sister right after the words tumbled out of his mouth.

...

'I can't wait to use this tomorrow, he he I am so excited!' Merida

squealed like a girly girl often would when receiving new clothes to wear or shoes - but in Merida's case, it was by having in her hands a weapon. One of the heavy beams that loomed above the pair, bathed in shadows and light from the fire at the centre of the front living room creaked. The sound caught Merida's attention, and she stopped in her tracks. 'What was that?' She whispered.

'Oh, it's nothing! You know, we're having the beams - er, replaced soon. Yeah, so don't be surprised if this happens a lot and -' Hiccup made up the first excuse that popped up in his head. But already, Merida had sprung into action when the black mass that was Toothless crossed a beam and shook the very foundation of the house.

'Get down!' Merida shoved Hiccup down, rolled across the floor and went into a crouching position. Within merely seconds or even less, Merida had gotten into position, had her weapon at the ready and released an arrow at Toothless. Before Hiccup could even muster the words to tell her to stop, Toothless let out a sound that could only convey agony as the arrow pierced his skin and lodged itself into his side.

'Hiccup, what's happened?' Valka cried, as she ran from the kitchen and to her son who was still on the floor, horrified at what Merida had done.

'That thing was in the house, I had to do something before it attacked! Did you expect me to sit here and let it kill us? Goddamnit I've fought demon bears, my instinct's pretty much to shoot in this kind of situation,' Merida explained, utterly baffled as to what she supposed was a dragon (did they even exist?) sidled up to Hiccup with his head bowed.

'We need Toothless to be examined, and quickly! C'mon bud.' Hiccup encouraged, he held onto this 'Toothless' creature tightly as he made his way to the door.

'Wait, you've got a name for that thing?' Merida cried, wide-eyed as she moved in front of Hiccup.

'What's this about demon bears, Merida?' Valka's brows furrowed as she stared at her daughter. 'C'mon, you can tell us at the arena. We'll explain everything once Toothless here gets some medical attention,' she soothed as the family went to the building where Toothless would be healed, bathed in utter darkness during their journey.

'Look, it was all my fault. When I was sixteen, I was given three suitors I had no interest in - as a bonus for the dilemma, I didn't want to get married at all. I was forced to accept that I was to be a wife, and then there was the Highland Games - it's an event where the suitors compete for the hand of their betrothed. I was, to put it bluntly - some award, is all. I was so angry that I had begun to think, and found a loophole. It was clearly stated that the first born of each allied clan could compete for the maiden's hand, and I was the firstborn in my family,' Merida revealed as they all walked, listening intently to her tale. 'So I purposefully chose archery as the main event that would win my hand, as it was my strong point. When the final suitor competed however, the weedy Dingwall lad had a bulls-eye after my father's demand to shoot shocked him and he released the arrow. I was so incensed and filled with bitter anger

that I told the spectators of my plans, I shot a bulls-eye at two of the previous targets, and my third arrow virtually split the third target's arrow and won the event. Later I had an argument with my mother, she said that I had caused embarrassment for everyone and in anger she threw my bow and arrow in the fire,' Merida said, Valka gasped as this was revealed. Merida regretted making the woman who had raised her seem so horrible at first, but this was the story in her own point of view. 'Afterwards, I took Angus and rode to the forest. Then after he threw me off, I was led by the Will O' The Wisps to the Witch's cottage,' she continued her tale, but Merida paused when the group reached the entrance doors to the centre of the arena.

'Darling, we're both listening to you. But for the moment, we have to check that no-one stayed behind and make sure people can't hear you speak,' Valka whispered, and used her arm to indicate to Merida that she should lower her voice level due to the fact that it was night-time and the Vikings were more prone to hearing their conversations than if it were daytime.

Merida nodded in response, she took a few tentative steps inside with the others. Hiccup had begun to light up the torches of fire within the arena and soon, it was bathed in a golden glow. Merida's eyes betrayed the sense of fear she kept buried, when she heard a series of roars and grunts that could only have come from creatures like the 'Toothless' figure she had just encountered.

'Okay, I don't think anyone's here. Check outside,' Valka informed Hiccup, and he scampered out. When he shut the doors to the arena behind him, he jumped when he spotted Astrid right next to him, leaning casually against the perimeter wall nearby with her trademark axe in one hand and a piece of flint in the other.

'Oh, evening Hiccup. Care to explain why this Alfifa person, is in fact a Scottish woman named Merida who is actually not a mute? Oh yeah, I've been here for a while.' Astrid's voice seemed calm, but there was a dangerous edge to it that made Hiccup's stomach do flip-flops. 'Heard you've been pretty close to her too, and now that you're sneaking around with her - I can't help but think-' she began, but was cut off by Hiccup.

'Astrid, it's not what you think. She's my sister!' His voice was strained as he said the entire thing, and he visibly winced when for a while his girlfriend had stopped speaking.

'W-what?' Astrid choked, eyes wide. How was this even possible?

'I only found out not too long ago myself, Astrid - so it's hard for me to swallow too. Merida's my twin, she was taken by the enemy during the war with the Scottish your mother died in twenty years ago, I'm so sorry Astrid. It's true, she was raised by Scottish nobles, she had no clue about her Viking roots until she found out by accident,' he said. The pair faced each-other, both wore expressions that contained mix emotions.

'This is so dangerous, Hiccup. What if the other Vikings find out? They won't want her...and don't be surprised if I find various ways to avoid her - like you said, she was raised by the very people who left me motherless for my entire life. How can I look at her the same

way again?' Astrid sighed, as she leaned in to hug her boyfriend.

'Look, Astrid, I've been in a similar situation before. But think of it this way, it wasn't Merida's fault that she's been raised this way - and after all, she's a tomboy. She has no interest in their customs and traditions.' Hiccup cracked a grin after he said this, and recalled how grateful his sister was when Gobber handed Merida her brand new bow earlier. 'Oh, and there's one more thing you need to know. She kind of found out about dragons today...Toothless wasn't very discreet when we came home, she shot an arrow at him and he's injured now.' He told Astrid, she reacted by displaying concern for Toothless and the other dragons.

'Hiccup, she's dangerous. She shot a Night Fury without mercy, don't you think the safety of Berk's best kept secret is important to you at all?' She responded.

'I recall a certain blonde Viking swinging an axe at Toothless when she first met him.' Hiccup snorted, he smiled when he recalled the memory of their first flight together with each-other.

'Oh, alright. But we have to keep an eye on her, just because she's related to you doesn't mean I'll keep my guard down.' Astrid grunted in reply as the pair turned back to enter the arena where the dragons were kept.

****Responses to Reviews****

waveringshadow:__ Thank you for the lovely review! Yes, I had a soft spot for Brave due to the Celtic connection and roots the movie had. And just as a teaser, I'll be adding Arthurian legends into the story. :) _

7. Terror in the Shadows

Author's Note: __Okay, so the climax to this chapter is going to be less tense than the previous one, because the next post will have a whole load of action in it (yes, I can already imagine you lot performing a happy dance). The first batch of chapters are the ingredients to a big melting pot - which is going to be the adventure and angst. I'm focusing on fluffy moments now between the Haddock family, because I don't want just angst, but there will be a lot of it when everything goes boom. _

Disclaimer:__ I do not own the How To Train Your Dragon franchise or the movie Brave. _

Read and Review, please! I'd love to read your opinions concerning the story. :)_

****_Chapter 7_****

'Look, she's really nice, Astrid. You've gotta' trust her!' Hiccup was desperate to have his girlfriend reconsider - she was being irrational, for Valhar's sake.

'Well, sorry if I'm paranoid. You might want to play happy families, but I'm not willing to put all of Berk including the dragons at risk,

all because this stranger is your flesh and blood. Now, let me interrogate her, or so help me -' Astrid was straight up in his face, blue eyes dangerously narrowed before she went into the arena to face Merida.

'Astrid, just wait up a second!' Hiccup called, his voice was hoarse after all of the arguing he went through just now with her. His hand went to drag along his face, he was shattered. The very thought of Astrid drawing away the sister he had only just met terrified him.

'Look, gingie. Everyone else might think you're all peaches and cream, but I know your true identity. You don't fool me for a single second! You're a Celt, you can't be trusted to live amongst Vikings.' Astrid was now eye to eye with Merida, the other girl's baby blues were drawn into a confused and hurt frown.

'Hey lady, I ran away - plus, I never was a Celtic woman in spirit or body...I've always been, well, different. A life of matrimony never was on the cards for me, but I had a duty to my Kingdom. And when I found out I was a stolen Viking child, I just cut off the ties to the family that dragged me down,' Merida revealed, she couldn't help but think again of her Scottish family back home. _No, this is my family now. This is your home, now go live in it, _a voice in the back of Merida's head reminded.

'How should I know whether you're lying or not?' Astrid let out in a growl, no - a threatening _snarl_ to be honest. Sure Astrid was known to be aggressive, but Hiccup had almost forgotten this side to her. After all, Astrid _was_ his girlfriend, she had no reason to be hostile to him.

'Because I know a child of mine when I see one, Astrid. Now chin up dear, and stop blaming Merida for your past,' Valka emerged from her position from inside a dragon's cage, her whole demeanor altogether spelled disapproval for her future daughter in law.

'Excuse me?! Never mind, I'm leaving,' Astrid swiveled around after she shook her head, not used to being spoken to so sternly by Valka.

'You...you won't tell anyone, will you? Please, Astrid, you have to understand! She's family,' Hiccup's voice was a mere whisper now as he stared at his sweetheart's retreating form. She stopped, turned back and told him with narrowed eyes; 'I thought I was family, Hiccup. Clearly, you need to sort out your priorities.' Astrid's opinion was clear - despite her connection to Hiccup, Merida had to _earn_ her trust before she handed it on a silver platter for her. Astrid turned on her heel and left the arena without a single glance back at her boyfriend.

'I'll just go and talk to her, mom -' Hiccup was about to run off after Astrid, but his mother placed a hand on his elbow.

'Don't pester her, darling. She's had enough for tonight...Astrid will see sense, just give her time,' Valka's voice was soothing, and turned the aftermath of the situation from tense to calm in seconds. 'As for you, young lady, you still have some explaining to do.' Her expression became stern as she stared at Merida, who seemed quite taken aback after all of the attention was brought onto Astrid

previously.

'Alright, I'll spit it all out. But after I tell you what happened when I was sixteen, do you promise to say what all of this 'dragon' business is about?' Merida had put on a serious demeanor to intimidate her brother into making some form of a deal. She was sure he would agree to it anyway, but still - she'd been recently feeling much too submissive and obedient under his care for her liking. She had to blow up some steam and be herself, or she'd snap. Merida's mouth widened into a full on smile, as she thought of going horse riding for the first time since she'd arrived in Berk in what seemed to her like forever ago.

'Of course.' Hiccup replied, outstretching his arm to shake on it with his sibling, Merida took his hand and gave it one firm shake of agreement. If one were to spy on the family, there'd be instead of boring negotiations - interesting tales and tidbits of witches, dragons and other mythical beings brought into play.

...

'So, can you tell me more about dragons then? I'd like one,' Merida trilled, absolutely delighted at the prospect of being able to fly. She'd seen many eagles and birds on the highlands back at home and from the windows of her castle, and she wanted so badly to just fly away and touch the sky.

'I'm not sure you can have one yet, Merida. You need to prove to the villagers that you're trustworthy enough to keep Berk's secret. Even if you're a mute, you'd be able to expose them in many different scenarios,' Hiccup explained as he opened the hatch and swung out the door that Merida assumed belonged to one of the countless dragons the Berkians kept.

'Alright, fine. But in the evenings, I'll be careful...can I spend some time with them? It's just, I think it'd be good if I gain the trust of the dragons too,' Merida asked, she bit her lip and her eyes trailed to the floor. Would Hiccup agree to the suggestion? Maybe he'd think it wasn't a good idea...

'I think it's a perfect idea, Merida. But yes, we have to be very careful and make sure you're not going to get caught - or our cover is blown! Now, I suggest we start small,' He responded eagerly, glad that his younger sister was getting the right idea.

'I'd better leave you both to it, then? Don't stay up too late, son - remember, you still have your Chieftain duties to perform.' Valka reminded, before she gave her two children an affectionate hug each and left to go back home.

When Valka had closed the entrance to the arena shut, Hiccup started to croon at a dragon that Merida could not see, the flames licked at the door to where the beast was kept but it was out of sight - hidden in the dark shadows that framed certain parts of the arena. She squinted to try and see what kind of creature was kept inside, but it was a fruitless attempt.

'Well Merida, this here is a Terrible Terror, the smallest of all dragons. Now don't be put off by it's size, they were once one of the most feared of dragons back when Berk used to attack them.' Hiccup

explained to his sister, once he had managed to adjust the dragon into the right position as he held it, as carefully as if it were a babe.

Merida wordlessly outstretched her arms - they trembled slightly, but she was determined to tame the beast. She saw the Night Fury, Toothless watch her with a sharp eye. _Of course he isn't too fond of _me, I did shoot an arrow at Toothless and injured him._ Merida mentally sighed. She giggled when the dragon was in her arms and had begun to snuggle into her chest.

'Yeah, despite their nature, the 'Terrible Terrors' are right softies. I guess they're a lot like cats in a sense,' Hiccup filled the silence with his tidbits of information about the kind of dragon in his sister's arms. He couldn't help but smile, once he'd seen how easily smitten the dragon, who had been named Amund which meant terror was with her.

'Since I can't have my own dragon yet, can I help look after Amund then during the evening hours?' Merida offered, but in a sense that she was expecting some sort of permission from her elder brother.

'Sure, sis. You can take care of him.' Hiccup replied. The two of them were silent after he spoke, and realised that for the first time he had displayed some sort of affection via a sisterly nickname. Both smiled at each-other - it wasn't much to anyone else, but to them, it was a step forward to a life long friendship and siblinghood.

_Author's Note:___ Updates every week (if not...then I have plenty of excuses! School, school, and school - ALevels, bleugh) _

****Responses to Reviews ****

_RandominatorOwl: _Yeah, she needs time to adjust to the whole dragon thing - which is why I'm not going to give her one until later on. Plus, she's not supposed to know about dragons, she has to go and see them when everyone's sleeping so she won't get caught. Also, the story doesn't have a crap-load of action yet because I'm concentrating on the family - but yes, there will be a pick in the pace (on the next chapter, in fact). _

8. First Hunt

_Author's Note:___ Hey guys! *gets pelted with rotten fruit* *ducks* I know, I was supposed to update ages ago. But now that my final piece for art has finished and my exams are done and over with, I have a lot more free time now. And my Christmas gift to you is a very, very long chapter that I hope will satisfy you! ^^ Now, I've made it quick so go ahead and read the damn thing ;) _

_Disclaimer:___ I do not own the How to Train Your Dragon franchise or the movie Brave, I only own the plot of this story _

Review please, I love reading people's opinions on the story! :)

_

****Chapter 08: First Hunt ****

'Are you sure you'll be alright sweetheart?' Valka asked, once Merida checked her satchel and replied with an eager nod - the hunting party stood outside, already most had mounted their horses. Usually the men would go and ride their pet dragons, but since information on the creatures were strictly prohibited to outsiders they'd decided to go and hunt the old fashioned way.

'Chief, we'll take good care of her, now come on miss.' The ring-leader, Haldor called as he flawlessly mounted his own steed, which was a tall equine with a grey and milk white spotted coat. Merida bowed her head in respect before she turned around to leave her mother and brother, needing to constantly remind herself that she wasn't supposed to be publicly affectionate with them or the Vikings would become suspicious - she needed to display a formal acquaintanceship with them to convince everyone that she had no connection to the chieftain's family.

'Would the lil' lady like some help?' A familiar voice snickered, causing Merida to freeze mid-step and ball her hands into fists. She turned around to see Snotlout on the back of a maroon stallion, looking unnervingly smug as he wiggled his dark brows and offered an extended arm.

Merida whipped around from the offending person, walked to the spare horse that had been given to her - actually, she sprinted towards her steed, grabbed the reins from her left hand, placed her left foot in the left stirrup and in a quick flourish, grabbed the saddle's horn with her right hand and sprang upward. She swung her right leg up and over the back of the horse. She landed in the saddle a bit too roughly, but Merida bit back a flinch which made her give the hostile effect she wanted anyway.

'Impressive, I don't meet many a female that knows how to ride. Heard you can shoot too - hm...you might not be such a burden after all,' Haldor mused, leaving the girl absolutely dumb-struck. She wished she could retort some snarky quips, but even if she could subdue her accent and speak Merida knew better than to talk down to someone with so much respect in the Viking community - Haldor had fought and survived many wars, and was said to have saved Stoic's life during a war once, so it wouldn't really do to turn her nose down at the man, even if his intended complement insulted the woman.

Merida slung the pack that carried her bows and arrows across her left shoulder whilst she tied her pack at the back of her saddle. She'd been itching to use them, but refrained from showing off until the moment was right - she had to show these guys exactly what she was made of.

A twinge of longing to be on her old horse Angus crept up at her, and felt guilty when she immediately found herself giving an apple she had on her person to gain the horse's trust - it was a silver, skinny equine, and Merida assumed she was the youngest out of the crowd of proud adults, for they often swayed their heads to intimidate the youngling. It reminded Merida of the times when she had to attend events full of proud nobles that just turned their noses up at her for her tomboyish behavior.

Merida patted the steed's neck, and decided that she'd claim ownership of the horse if there was nobody to look after it. After

all, if Angus was found he'd surely be slaughtered - anything Scottish was scrutinized, and that included the animals...the horses in particular the Vikings were said to fear, for during battle their kin's skulls and rotting heads were often seen decorating the Celtic horses on the field or during raids. She had to just hope for the best that Angus was far away from this place by now.

'Her name's Tyra, by the way. She was born premature, but look at her now - off to go hunting with the rest of em'. I was the one that looked after 'er as a foal,' a man with flecks of grey in his dark hair and vibrant blue eyes told a surprised Merida, who couldn't help but allow a smile to tug across her features as the group of hunters gathered to leave for the morning.

'Ah, stop it with your soppy stories and leave the little lady alone. She's enough of a nuisance as it is, can't have her getting too attached to the group before she gets any ideas.' A gruff voice interrupted the sweet moment between Merida and the man, causing the girl to shoot the speaker a dirty glare - but she faltered, and mentally gasped when she saw how much the older adult resembled a certain annoying Viking.

Was he Snotlout's_ father?_

She turned her head around, only to see the afore-mentioned young man slap a hand to his forehead once he was caught staring at her after his father's admonished snort directed towards her. Yep, they were _certainly_ alike...but Snotlout seemed to be in a friendlier frame of mind, despite his obvious ego.

Merida only wished she could speak her mind in these kinds of situations, but that was out of the question - the fact constantly plagued her thoughts and she grew frustrated at certain times.

The group had now started to move, and Merida couldn't help but turn around and give an energetic wave to her mother and brother, who amiably returned with more casual ones - the pair stood atop a ridge overlooking the hunting party, who had gathered at a wide fork on a dirt road that was surrounded by many houses, with families standing on the thresholds to wish the group good luck on their trip.

'Alright, miss - we're gonna get into a full gallop, but we've got this fella right here to show you the ropes and fall behind with you, if you want to take it easy and...nevermind,' Haldor dead-panned, his squared shoulders had slumped down, and he gave an annoyed frown as Merida took Taya's reins and had the young equine prance around in a little trot and circle around the group. 'Well, I guess you can handle yourself pretty well on a horse, Lady Alfifa, now let's go guys,' he continued once he'd regained composure. With her head held up high and mighty, Merida kicked Taya's hide and went into a full gallop with the rest of the men. She reached back to grab an arrow, whilst her right hand clutched the newly crafted arrow made by Gobber, her godfather apparently.

Once they were deep into the forest, the group slowed down and fell silent. They needed to be as quiet as possible if they were to catch any good game, and they all needed as much energy as possible for the afternoon.

Quite a few rustling noises could be heard alongside visual evidence of thriving wildlife, giving the men much to be eager about. Many bows and arrows were drawn at the ready, but their smiles dropped when they realized the rustling did not belong to an animal.

It was an ambush.

Dragons flew from the skies above, destroying the placid forest scenery in an instant rush of flame and ash.

'The Lava Louts! Quick, fall back - fall back, someone, go get the chief!' Haldor called as he drew two swords from his waist and swiftly slashed them across the air to get some of the opposing men to back away.

Merida could see from her position on top of Tyra that her hunting party was surrounded, and she saw the ring-leader sit upon what she recalled from her brief pep-talk by Hiccup as a Monstrous Nightmare. She quietly snorted at the irony of it.

'Haldor, good to see you. Good to see you, how's the new chief doing in Berk?' A young, good looking man asked the leader of Berk's hunting party with a lethal smile that was altogether confusing - half pleasant, but half fake and misleading. The man's grey eyes locked onto Haldor's own, the Monstrous Nightmare was still aflame, and Merida assumed that the dragon scales that served as armour protected its rider from being burnt.

'Our chief's doing fine, Einar. Now go home, we don't do well with trespassers,' Haldor responded calmly, but his clenched jaw and weary disposition confirmed that on the inside he was seething. Merida watched the exchange and grew more anxious as the conversation continued - her companions were nervous too, and kept shooting quick glances every now and then since she was supposed to be in the dark in all of this.

'Such a pity, a real shame. I thought Chief Hiccup would want to negotiate on matters concerning the dragon egg he found not too long ago...after all, I could use a Night Fury.' Einar retorted, and his smile became a harsh grin. His eyes swept across Haldor's company of hunters all with their weapons drawn, but he had to blink a few times in astonishment as he spotted Merida on top of Tyra. 'Well well well, Haldor, who is this? I knew you had a lot more respect for females than my tribe do, but to let a woman hunt with the men? I am very surprised,' Einar admonished with a snicker, keeping his beefy arms folded tight against his chest as he held back a laugh.

'Those are just rumors, Einar and you know it. Toothless is the only Night Fury left. And this is Alfifa, a mute Viking noblemaiden - she's under the care of the Chief and his mother, Valka. Her homeland was raided by the Celts and she received sanctuary in our village. Alfifa has since healed from her wounds and is recovering in Berk,' Haldor revealed, hoping that the brutish man's attention would draw away from information on a Night Fury egg and instead shall fall upon the strange woman that even he knew hardly anything but the basics about. 'And after all, it was on the chief's insistence that she'd be a good addition to the hunting party. Not everyone here agrees,' Haldor paused for a moment, and turned his head back to look at his friends - some grumbled under their breath in obvious agreement whilst others stayed silent, 'but I've yet to see the woman

disappoint me, she's clearly very skilled.' He finished, and saw the girl bring her horse next to Haldor's own, clearly she had gained confidence during the confrontation.

'Well, aren't you Berkians just full of surprises?' Einar muttered, chuckling under his breath as he motioned for his Monstrous Nightmare to stop setting itself on fire. 'But so, am, I!' he growled, separating the syllables as he strained to force Merida off of her horse and into his own grasp.

'Let her go, Einar! I swear to Valhar, you'll never harm that girl so long as I'm here,' Hiccup called from the air, landing between Haldor and Einar with a determined scowl. He dismounted from Toothless, and ignored the stare the treacherous man gave towards his peg-leg - most enemies thought his handicap was a weakness, but now with almost six years of practice it was as good as any real leg.

'Now, tell me about the egg or I slice open the fair maiden's neck! C'mon, don't be shy. I had a spy infiltrate the last meeting, so I know you're lying. Tell me where it is,' Merida saw the surrounding men falter in their attack, look her up and down and muse on whether a stranger was worth the risk of a bloodbath - the complete opposite in what Hiccup appeared to be doing. She heard a swift swish of a blade being drawn, and felt the hilt of a sword slowly start to draw blood on her pale neck.

She took this moment of hesitation and Einar's drawn focus from her to elbow the man in the jaw, giving her small but obvious neck wound in the process as Einar's knife fell to the ground. She slid off of the Monstrous Nightmare gracelessly (after all, who got off of a dragon every day?) and landed onto the ground, and now she was glad she'd worn proper Viking clothes on this trip. She extended her arm back and reached for an arrow, upon that moment of instinct she pointed an arrow at an attacking man's forehead and hit him smack bang on target. The shock of it caused Merida to falter, but she reigned her emotions in and aimed at Einar, who threw his hands up and gave the warrior a defeated glare.

'Fine, whore, I'll leave. But I'm not done here yet, and I will not rest until I get my hands on that Night Fury egg. And I'll get my revenge, you'll wish you'd stayed indoors like a good girl,' Einar growled, before he soared into the air with his companions and disappeared into the clouds.

'Alfifa, are you alright?' Hiccup gasped, and ran towards her so he could help the maiden who was currently bent over one leg. She was short of breath, her blue eyes unable to move away from the gruesome image - a man with an arrow lodged deep into his forehead, his face equal to that of a fallen warrior (which he technically was, but the stranger must have been some kind of a thug if he lived with the Lava Louts). His face was as pale as chalk, and the face seemed so serene and peaceful that Merida seemed to suddenly forget that merely two minutes ago the guy had tried to kill her.

Merida crawled over to the body, wracking in silent sobs as she realized that she'd killed a person for the first time.

Merida didn't even protest when her older brother picked her up in his arms, allowing the shell-shocked girl to wrap her arms around him in a tight embrace. She'd gone through so much, Hiccup mused, and

thought back to what she'd said about the failed wedding. But he shook his head and brought his focus onto the topic at hand - coughing lightly, he said clearly to the remaining men;

'You guys go ahead, and I'll return Alfifa to the village...after all, she probably didn't expect her first kill to be a human. I'll inform the council of what happened, and I'll try to gather the Berkians and organize a meeting for us all, now go.' Hiccup announced, and with the final words said Toothless shot up like a bullet into the air and headed home to Berk.

****Responses to Reviews ****

allison daughter of apollo: _sorry I haven't been updating as much as I should have, but now that I've finished my final piece for art I now have a lot more free time on my hands (and don't get me started on exams!). And thanks! What are you looking forward to seeing in the story? :) _

9. All Good Things To Those Who Wait

****A/N:****_Guess which Disney villain said a line that mirrored the title? Any guesses? :p _

****Disclaimer:**** _I do not own the How To Train Your Dragon franchise or the movie Brave. The respective companies of Dreamworks, Pixar and Disney do_

****Chapter 09: All Good Things to Those Who Wait ****

'Merida...I'm so sorry.' Hiccup sighed, as Toothless's wings had begun to spread out within seconds so the wind could slow him down and allow a smooth landing. As the two stayed upon the dragon's back for a while, his sister replied;

'You have nothing to be sorry for, brother.' She let out a cry of frustration, surprising her older sibling greatly. 'Agh! I don't know why I've been crying so much lately. I've always been the strong one, I've always had to prove to everyone that I wasn't a delicate piece of porcelain pottery - especially since I was sick as a child often. For a long time even drawing back a bow and arrow was a great struggle for me until I grew older,' Merida confessed, her god-forsaken tears had dried upon her pale face but now returned full force at the stress of things.

'Hey, we can handle this Merida. After everything you've been through, I made it my duty to sort things out so we can be a proper family, just try.' Hiccup encouraged as he helped his sibling dismount from Toothless. The dragon kept glancing at his rider, wondering how to comfort him without being in the way of the pair's private moment. He hadn't taken much of a liking to the flame haired girl with a sharp tongue to boot, and was constantly reminded of how much he'd loathed and distrusted Astrid after the crazy bitch had aimed an axe at him upon their first meeting.

'All I've ever done is try, I've never _stopped_ trying. Can I just be carefree for once in my life without earning dire consequences as a result?' Merida spat in a feral hiss, regretting the tone immediately when she saw how drawn and haggard her brother's face had

suddenly become.

'Merida, the moment someone stops trying is the moment they give up. Bad things happen when you do, and I only want good things for you. Now come on, I need you to come with me to see the elders,' Hiccup responded sternly, just as her mother would have done. How was she faring? Merida's gut did a few back flips, wondering whether the DunBroch clan had even survived the scandalous moment that was the result of a heat of the moment decision Merida wished she could re-wind.

But you'd never have met your real family, a voice coaxed in her head, causing the confused woman to feel utterly conflicted as she always did from time to time since her arrival in Berk. Merida bumped into a few people as she got dragged along behind Hiccup, who was tugging at her wrist in desperation - Toothless was not far behind her.

'Ah, what brings our young chief here? I assume the hunting party went well - you look exhausted, Merida my dear,' an elderly woman with silver white hair and thin, hazel eyes called when Hiccup arrived inside a bustling council's quarters.

'No, Gothi, it went down all so terribly wrong. Einar pestered the hunters about the Night Fury egg, and yes, Alfifa knows about dragons. I need people to spread the word that there's going to be a village meeting,' Hiccup said the last part of his sentence in a louder voice, causing some men to rush out to inform the Berkians as quickly as possible of this newly received information.

'Alright, the men are to it now, we need to defend the people as quickly as possible if Berk is to be threatened by outside forces. And you should know by now my dear, that you cannot hide anything from ole' Gothi, you know I'd keep a secret of the chief's to the depths of my own grave,' Gothi muttered, her eyes narrowed as she saw a few people straining to eavesdrop, and dragged Hiccup towards an empty room, using her arms to cast a spell that would make sure no one on the outside could hear their conversation. Merida was in the gathering hall, presumably waiting for the meeting between chief and elder to end. 'You can tell me anything, chief - I have a secret that's just as important that should be kept hidden,' Gothi said in an overly dramatic whisper, giving her chief a mischievous wink as she huddled towards a nearby fireplace. She lit it, and in the process levitated two chairs towards it. Hiccup promptly edged towards his seat on the left of the fireplace, sitting beside the old woman.

'Alright, point taken.' He started with a nod, taking a deep breath as he recounted the week's events, all the way up from Merida's unexpected arrival, what she went through and the hunt that had ended in disaster earlier. 'So, with all of the extra enemies and the strain of keeping Merida's identity a secret, I've been needing some advice from someone who's not in my family,' Hiccup finalized, letting out an exhale of relief as he released all of the burdens that had mounted upon his shoulders in the last few weeks.

'Yes, chief, I can see where you're coming from,' Gothi murmured, bringing a hand to rub her chin as she tried to produce a carefully laid reply. 'I'd focus on protecting Berk, first. Then you can sort out everything that's going on with your family. After all, Berk is

your top priority. I'm not saying that your family's any less important - but what I'm saying is if the land is protected, then your family and people are safe and you can focus on building your relationship with your fiancée Astrid, and newly reconciled sibling,' the wise elder advised, smiling.

'Thanks, Gothi, I've really needed a good chat with someone who's not my mom. It's been a stressful few weeks,' Hiccup admitted, patting the elder's shoulder before he got up and left to meet up with the villagers. Many had already arrived, and despite being almost full a few people still managed to squeeze themselves into the curious and worried Vikings.

'People of Berk, I have some news, and I might as well say that it's not very good news.' Hiccup began, scanning the crowd for signs of any unfamiliar or dodgy faces before he continued. 'When the hunting party left, they were threatened by Einar. Alfifa, our guest was harmed but she attacked the offending opponent and assisted in drawing away the enemy.' Hiccup revealed, earning a few cheers of approval as several locals patted a grinning Merida on the back after they'd heard of her feat. 'However, Einar's been asking around about a Night Fury egg, and someone let slip of the one found on a land Toothless and I discovered North East of Berk. We've seen signs of other Night Furies in that area, so Einar's bound to want one so he can instil fear and gain dangerous allies in the process,' he continued, eliciting gasps and murmurs of shock - whispers about more Night Furies and the threat of the Viking Einar were promptly heard in the quiet clamour of the chief's meeting. 'I know you're all worried, but we'll make sure that neither Berk nor the dragons are threatened. Astrid, Snotlout and Fishlegs are out surveying the seas, we need to keep a look out for any enemies to get a quick warning, so we can prepare ourselves and defend the land.' Hiccup finalized, asking whether anyone had any questions.

'What about Alfifa? She could've easily let slip some information - she's living under your roof after all,' a villager suggested, glaring in the utmost suspicion towards Merida, who's slightly bored face suddenly sprung into attention. She swivelled around, glared at the offending person and returned to folding her shoulders, letting out an annoyed huff. Honestly, how difficult were these flippin', thick headed Vikings?

'I think you forgot that she's mute, sir.' Hiccup responded, dragging a hand down his tired face. He knew that even if there was the tiniest shred of suspicion against Merida, then he'd hate to know how everyone would react if they accidentally discover that both he and 'Alfifa' are actually related.

'Yes, but you pointed out that she's capable of writing - she could've easily slipped in some information to the enemy and been sneaking out behind your back,' the man pointed, folding his arms across his chest as he stared, entirely unamused at the chief.

'Alfifa has no reason to betray Berk. After all, had it not been for our village, she would've starved to death in the woods.' Hiccup replied, swallowing down the shudder that was sure to have escaped him had he realised that fact in the privacy of his own home. A few grumbled their agreements in response, seeing the logic of this statement.

Nobody seemed to have any more questions, so the Berkians were dismissed after a few minutes of stunned silence. The crowds of people melted away into a handful of folk, and Hiccup let out a relieved sigh. Well, that was one thing ticked off of his huge to-do list, he just hoped that Astrid and the others were safe.

...

'Cornelius! So good to see you,' Einar called in greeting, as he spotted the Roman emperor conversing with Algar, a ruthless Saxon leader who'd allied with him. Cornelius halted the conversation with a flick of his hand - Algar bristled at the lack of respect, but kept his bile down for was sure that he'd reap the benefits of this alliance in the end.

'Einar, there's no time for this. We must attack Berk now, my men tire of you constantly halting their battles,' Cornelius sneered, his hand kept dangerously close to the hilt of his sword. 'They have glory to bring back to their families in Rome.' He finished, his scarred lip stuck in a permanent scowl.

'Of course my lord, I promised you and Algar land and you shall receive your land - but after all, all good things come to those who wait.' Einar responded with a wicked smirk.

****Response to Reviews****

****Guest:**** _Finally, someone who's interested in Merricup, but not in a romantic way! I always thought they'd get along better being relatated than as a pairing. I have found a few stories, but the plotlines always either had bad grammar, were abandoned two chapters in, contained a rushed plot line or seemed too far fetched. I was so frustrated that I decided that I should write my own story, and I had a feeling that there were fans like me so the thought why the heck not? Every time I tried to find a Hiccup/Merida story, it had romance so I wanted a fanfiction crossover to focus on other genres instead_

****allison daughter of apollo:**** _Me neither! :p I've got the reveal in my head, and I want to make it as realistic as possible. Excited for anything else? I've introduced new foes, so it should give a clue to some portion of the story_

****Apocolypse owner:**** _Ha ha, that's what I was thinking. Originally, I wrote out a different version which was way too boring, considering the pace of the story now - so I wanted to start things of with a shezam. And since I had a hunt in mind already Einar popped inside my head. I didn't want to make another Drago, so I wanted a villain that desired control over humans (the Hairy Hooligans in particular) and he'd want a Night Fury too_

10. Witch's Brew

****Author's Note: ****_Sorry if this chapter's a bit shorter than usual, but I felt that it should have ended where it did. I've just got to edit the next one, and it'll be up during the weekend sometime. And great news guys - there's a DeviantArt user, TigerMoonCat and she's

making a story cover. We've planned it a bit and she's done two versions, but we've finally come to a decision and she gave me a fab sketch of the final product. She just needs to add the detail and finishing touches, then it's up! She's very talented, I love her art :D _

****Disclaimer:****_ I do not own the How To Train Your Dragon franchise or the movie Brave. The companies of Dreamworks Animation, Disney and Pixar do _

_Review please! I love reading people's opinions of the story. Tell me whether you liked it or not :) _

****Chapter 10: Witch's Brew ****

'Astrid, ya' sure you don't want to call it a day? We're all bored out of our minds, it's cold and we haven't eaten since breakfast.' Tuffnut called over the wind to the group's leader, who was scanning the territory with much vigour. They'd been flying for quite some time, and had just crossed the shoreline to the sea.

'No, Hiccup said we needed to scout ahead and see whether there were any foreign threats Einar was bound to ally with to gain access to the dragons, including the Night Fury egg - he's very persuasive, so keep a sharp eye for any ships that aren't of Viking craftsmanship,' Astrid informed, bringing Stormfly towards the clouds so they wouldn't be spotted by anyone roaming the seas.

'Hey, over there!' Ruffnut pointed next to her twin towards a few ships that had gathered around a patch of sea-water, they were close knit and the vessels had symbols that weren't Viking at all, but had some similarities.

'Okay - I'll go down with Snotlout, you guys stay up and if we're not back soon, get the others. We're just gonna' check out what's going on down there,' Astrid ordered. Luckily, there were several rock faces she could hide behind as she got closer to the ship with Snotlout, who was on top of his Monstrous Nightmare. Sea salt sprayed onto her face and the sea was a charcoal grey - Astrid had to tuck her braid in the back of her hood so it wouldn't keep on smacking into her face. Sailing in this kind of dreaded weather was a death wish, what made these people so desperate? A sinking feeling in the pit of her stomach told Astrid that it was not for a good reason.

Not at all.

...

'Excellent work on rallying the people, chief. Your father would've been very proud,' Gothi said to Hiccup, leaning across her staff as she reached him. Merida was standing next to her brother, watching the people that came and went - some Berkians from the meeting earlier had decided to stay inside the central hub building, deciding that this was the right time to catch up with friends, relatives and acquaintances.

'Hiccup, great speech back there! I've no worries for the island - for you see, Einar's nothing compared to us Berkians and our dragons. He won't even ally with those pesky Celts back in Scotland, the clans

are too busy fighting each-other to care about some story about dragons,' Snotlout's father gave a bark of laughter and walked away after patting an astonished chief on the back.

He and Merida left Gothi, who's earlier smile had all but vanished. The pair went back to the main house, unsure of how to inform Valka of their predicament. Their mother was present during earlier's speech, but had returned home afterwards to discuss things over with another elder.

'Mom, where're you?' Hiccup called, the door gave an echoing groan as he pushed it open. Merida slipped inside afterwards, whilst Toothless clambered onto the underside of the threshold. He crawled underneath the beams and landed onto the floor in a sloop, greeting Cloudjumper who'd curled up into a ball next to the fireplace.

'There you are Hiccup, I'm right here silly! I knew you'd be held back after earlier's meeting, so I decided to have a discussion with Arvid,' Valka was evidently enjoying herself - she'd propped her legs upon a foot-rest covered in dark animal skins and fur, leaning back in an armchair next to Cloudjumper. Hiccup hadn't noticed the Deadly Nadder sleeping on top of the beams above the chatting pair until he'd heard the creature snoring.

'We need to tell you something...in private,' Hiccup said, eyes sliding to the elder whom immediately excused himself after murmuring his goodbyes. Once the coast was clear and the family saw the elder become a speck in the distance, Toothless perked his ears up to check whether there was anyone else outside who could overhear their conversation. Luckily the chief's house was more of a solitary building, perched atop a lone hill overlooking the village of Berk, so the closest neighbors were the people living at the bottom of it.

'What is it, sweetheart?' Valka asked, going in to hug her son and daughter as she swept up from the armchair she'd been sitting and stood in front of her children.

'After the meeting, Spitelout Jorgensen told me that the Scottish clans are at war. At the brunt of it is Merida's homeland DunBroch, including the Macintosh clan that attacked her during the ceremony she escaped from a few months ago,' Hiccup revealed, bringing a comforting hand to Valka's shoulder. 'She wants to go back and sort out what she started. We know it'll be dangerous, but it's the only way to finish things properly. Do you want to go with us?' He asked, lightly pulling Merida to his side as he gave her a side hug. Valka faltered for a moment as she took the news in, but she gave a determined nod of agreement.

'Yes'.

...

'Sister, did they receive the news about DunBroch?' A grey haired witch draped in a cloak asked her relative, Gothi, who was standing atop a black cauldron that swirled to form the image of her younger sibling, who resided in a cottage in DunBroch, disguising herself as a hermit who sold carvings for a living.

'Yes, they'll be there - I've made sure of it. The lives of the

Haddock family is now forever changed by fate, and only fate can decide how this battle ends. No more war, no more loved ones lost to the prejudice and greed of other men.' Gothi returned sternly, eliciting a firm, understanding nod from her sister who disappeared the moment the message ended.

_'This ends now.' _

****Responses to Reviews ****

****Clowdia:**** _Thank you! What did you enjoy about it, and what are you excited to see next in the story? And yup, it was certainly Gothel. Hope you liked that little tease in the end of this chapter too _

****(Guest)Ry:**** _As you can see, we'll be seeing DunBroch again soon! It was part of the plot I'd had drafted up and planned, so yeah. Glad you were thinking of the Scots :p _

****Apocalyse Owner:**** _Yeah, it would have been a pretty damn ridiculous thing to say XD. But yes, that's the loophole - some really stubborn Vikings aren't really going to trust outsiders no matter what. I thought that it'd be unrealistic if no one has the crazy idea to actually blame Merida, considering the fact that no one knows her a lot personally, so of course they'd be suspicious

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11. Taming the Beast

****Author's Note: ****_Hi guy! The absolutely __fantastic __cover for this story was made by the brilliant, talented TigerMoonCat who's work you can check out on DeviantArt. She's very good, highly recommended. I loved what she did with the cover, and I'm just overall really chuffed with the final results. Eeeekkk. ^^

_

****Chapter 11: Taming the Beast ****

As the family of three stood in the arena once more, Hiccup drew out the various dragons that Merida could choose or bond with. She'd already taken care of the Terrible Terror Amund, but he was obviously too small to ride and take on a long, dangerous journey to the Scottish highlands.

So the young Celt, born a Viking needed to take a dragon for the family's trip - and fast. She bit her lip as her brother lined up the eager creatures, their acute senses already aware of her blood relation to the 'Dragon Master'.

First came a Gronckle, flying up to her in the likeness of movement more considered towards wild bees than dragons. Its tongue flopped out of its mouth, and the Gronckle sniffed her hand. The friendly beast's tongue lolled and it began to lick her, but Merida just didn't feel the connection as she did before with Amund. She tried all of the dragons be it Monstrous Nightmare, Zippleback, or Deadly Nadder - she just couldn't get it right, no matter how much she tried. She wanted to feel the instant connection Hiccup felt when he first pressed his palm against Toothless.

'I'm never going to get my own dragon!' Merida whispered behind the palm of her hand, which was covering her mouth as she spoke - a few people had come to see how she was fairing with the dragons. Some had already left, too impatient to see the results.

'Don't look at me like that, Alfifa.' Hiccup responded, raising an eyebrow at his sister's exasperation - he'd imagined that if they were raised with each-other, the pair would've been chalk and cheese. She would have been an absolute nightmare as a teenager, he thought with an internal chuckle. 'There's still one more dragon, but I doubt you'd like her very much,' Hiccup finished slowly, closing in on an already open pen where a dragon kept itself in the back, hidden in the shadows.

'What's up with that one?' Merida questioned, keeping a balled fist tight against her mouth so no on-lookers from above could see her lips move in a speaking manner. Her mother, Valka strode over and stood between her children, placing a comforting hand on her daughter - she, as someone who'd had a very good relationship with dragons hadn't experienced her child's frustration with them, but she'd gone through the same thing with people once upon a time, when she came back to Berk (and it still happened before her disappearance).

'Timberjacks have sharp wings and are usually friendly dragons, but this one's got quite a short fuse so people stay clear of her. She's far less gentler than the other one, a male. We only have two Timberjacks as far as we know of on Berk. She has no name and no owner,' Hiccup added, giving Merida a sad smile. He placed both hands in front of him, knelt onto his knees and tried to draw out the ferocious beast, but to no avail, the stubborn thing would just not budge a single bit. Sighing, he got up and said; 'See?'

'Let me try,' Merida whispered against her hand. Before giving anyone a moment's notice, she moved forward and pressed herself against the ground, so the dragon wouldn't be afraid or feel threatened of her. Her brother crouched down and brought a hand to her elbow, gently trying to draw her away from the hot headed, nameless creature that reminded Merida so much of herself before 'the bear incident', and even now at times.

She evened out her breathing and kept her fear at bay, remembering how terrified she was of Angus when her father gave him as a birthday present after she'd turned thirteen years. Merida missed her massive, ebony steed terribly and was getting mighty attached to the dragon in front of her, even if she'd yet to touch it. The creature was different, in the way she was back when she'd still resided in DunBroch - the feisty, hot headed princess people tended to stay well away from. This was a match made in heaven, ying and yang. Though not so different.

The dragon emitted several feral hisses, making Hiccup give one last tug - he carried on being persistent until she gave a hard pull at her sleeve and shoved him aside. Merida knew she had most likely hurt his feelings, as Hiccup's only motive was to protect her. But Merida was tired of being treated like a piece of china, bound to be broken if not handled with care. She'd proven herself back in the woods, and she'd gladly to it again.

The unnamed creature gave the former princess a suspicious glare, but

softened when it assessed her to not be a threat. It gave several sniffs to her hand, but retreated again quickly and gave a warning growl when the girl brought her hand too quickly towards the Timberjack.

'It's okay, I won't hurt you.' Merida whispered, sure that no Berkians, including her brother and mother, Valka could hear her. In what seemed like forever, Merida inched herself closer and closer to the feral dragon. She gave a sharp lurch, but steadied herself after the dragon once again, snapped and almost tore her hand off in the process. Merida waved away Hiccup, who was nervously watching and taking closer steps towards the pair, fighting the urge to drag his sibling by the hair away from the unpredictable Timberjack.

The dragon, once again leaned forward and gave several sniffs at Merida's hand. It gave one small, tentative lick at the limb and Merida slowly but surely, gained confidence as she petted the dragon's snout. The Timberjack visibly relaxed and gave a purr of contentment as its new owner began to stroke and pet her, and she leaned her head into Merida's lap. 'Oh, you're nothing but a big old sweetheart! Who's a good girl?' Merida whispered in the dragon's ear, said beast elicited another purr, obviously enjoying the contact. Hiccup gave an audible, exhausted and absolutely relieved sigh when he saw no blood or injuries sustained from the confrontation.

He and Valka surrounded the pair, sharing a look as they saw Merida emit very low, soft giggles that weren't very likely to echo and be heard by the curious locals watching 'Alfifa' tame her first dragon.

As Merida drew out the Timberjack, several villagers stood with slack jaws, many gave wolf whistles of absolute astonishment - there were also a lot of cheers rewarded to the girl as it was announced that the Timberjack, now named Shelby was to be 'Alfifa's' new dragon.

Some villagers went up to congratulate Merida on obtaining her new companion, whilst others just passed by and gave the girl a pat on the back including a warm smile. It seemed that if the most suspicious and feral dragon of all Berk trusted this stranger, then so could everyone else. Hiccup was glad that everything had gone so well, so far at least. Now the group had one place to go.

And that place was DunBroch.

****Author's Note:**** _How was the chapter guys, and did you like the name and breed of dragon I chose for Merida? A hot headed Timberjack named Shelby, yup. :p_

_And if you're all curious, the name Shelby means 'Farm of willows', I chose it for Merida's Timberjack, because in the Dragon book they were described as having wings so sharp they could slice through trees. _

****Responses to Reviews ****

Clowdia: _Funnily enough, I originally didn't plan for Gothi and the witch from Brave to be sisters - but damn, the idea worked so well with the story and just popped into my head as I was writing the chapter 'Witch's Brew'. All I can say is that they had a similar

situation to Hiccup and Merida and were separated as children - you can guess for now, but you'll find out why soon. ;) _

_The ships actually belong to Einar, Cornelius (the Roman Emperor) and Algar (the Saxon Warlord). They will be the main antagonists of the story, as many readers I assume have suspected. _

Apocalypse owner: _I didn't see that coming too! :p (If you're talking about the part where the witch from Brave and Gothi are biological siblings) And yup, they're sisters. I agree, it does kind of make sense in a way. Because they both have magical powers (I made Gothi be a magic wielder in this story, because back when the writers had 'How To Train Your Dragon' movie drafts and when there was more of a magical element to the film, Gothi originally had a much bigger role to fill and was kind of like a priestess or whatever. But she was just reduced to a few cameos, when there was no magic involved in the film. But since Brave has magic included, I thought I could make an interesting alternative. :) _

_Elizabeth James Scott: _Thank you for the review! I wrote this fic because I was banging my head against the wall because of how many 'romance' stories plagued the crossover sections of this site - I craved something different so I thought hey, why not write an original plot myself? So thanks for thinking that this wasn't your usual 'HiccupxMerida hashtag arranged marriage' or alliance story. Or whatever. And yup, reviewed your story. ^^ _

_RandominatorOwl: _Thank you for the support, it's great to see that readers have so much enthusiasm for the story. :nods: What are you looking forward to seeing in the future? :D_

12. The Tempest

****Author's Note:**** _Okay, so longer chapter compared to the previous two this time - guys. Enjoy and review, please! _

****Disclaimer:**** _I do not own the How To Train Your Dragon franchise or the movie Brave _

****Chapter 12: The Tempest****

So, what happens when Berk is vanquished?' Algar asked, causing the Roman emperor, Cornelius beside him to roll his eyes. The three allies stood upon the quarterdeck of Cornelius's ship - as the vessel was larger than the Saxon longships and Viking boats, and as a plus side there was far more privacy, so no crew mate nor scoundrel wishing for a good lashing from the whip could eavesdrop on their meetings.

'Isn't it obvious - did I not make myself clear? We win this war, and I get my dragons. You get your land, plus extra protection from enemy raids. See? Simple.' Einar explained in a tone one would use for a complete dunder head.

'Easier said than done,' Algar murmured, despite having defeated every opponent his soldiers have decided to join in battle. He'd been overly confident before - time and time again, but dragons? He wasn't so sure, especially if this 'Dragon Master' was in control of the alpha, a Night Fury that was said to be the embodiment of lightning

and death itself.

'Stop being such a nervous ninny, Algar. You're reputed to be very cruel and a vicious war-monger, have faith - do you want to keep that reputation?' Einar snorted, sidling next to the grumbling Saxon who muttered his assurances.

'Yes.' The stubborn man responded with much reluctance.

'I'll ask again, you filthy Viking - when will my men see battle?' Cornelius growled, throwing his sword onto the dark floorboards. Some heads shot up in curiosity from below deck but quickly lowered once the men realized that their bloodthirsty leaders were aware of their flapping ears.

'Patience is a virtue, your lordship. If we attacked Berk now, our efforts would be all for nought,' Einar pointed, the two men in front of him, with squared shoulders shared an agitated glance at each-other.

'And why exactly is that?' Algar spat, foaming at the mouth. He did have a bad feeling about Berk - after all, they had dragons as their allies, but he too like his Roman counterpart was getting impatient, itching for a war.

'Because the Chief's little friends will go and tell him exactly what surprise we've got planned.' Einar bellowed. He swiftly turned around and marched towards the side of Cornelius's ship, grabbing two people who'd managed to have heard the entire conversation.

'Unhand us, you monster!' A blonde female yelled, kicking the air as the Viking dragged her and a dark haired male towards a nearby mast, effortlessly tying a rope around the pair within moments.

'Not just yet, sweetheart. Can't have you ruining everything, is that right guys?' Einar's former frown twisted into a glorious grin, one that would've passed off as charming had Astrid been in a different situation and wasn't an enemy to the man.

'Hiccup will find out about this!' Astrid shrieked. Several strands of blonde hair fell into her eyes as she breathed deeply, trying with all her might and effort yet failing to free herself from the bonds of the rope that'd been tied around her.

'Ah, first name basis, eh? Tell us your name darling,' Einar asked, feeling slightly curious as to who the woman was. After all, she must've been important to the chief and knew him very well if she called him by his first name.

'Never,' Astrid hissed and brought her face defiantly towards Einar, now she was only inches away from the man who'd crouched forwards and gave a piercing glare.

Look here, girly. Tell us your name, or we throw this lad overboard.' He warned, lifting Astrid's chin so she could face an increasingly terrified Snotlout.

'You wouldn't dare.' Astrid retorted lowly, giving Einar an equally frightening glare. Nobody messed with her friends.

'Why not? It's not like he's anybody important,' Einar gave a deep throated chuckle and slashed his sword forward, bringing it terribly close to Snotlout's face.

'Hey, don't talk to her like that!' Snotlout howled with an increasing sense of confidence. He didn't care if he ended up dead, as long as Astrid was safe back in Berk then he'd done his job - a hero's duty. His father might even be proud of him for once.

'Shut up! Filth. Things _just_ got interesting here,' Cornelius screamed in his sudden bout of rage. He'd been waiting for some sort of catalyst, and here it was. Some unimportant dog was not going to ruin anything for him.

'Well, sorry to cut the party short but we've gotta go. Nice meetin' you guys,' Snoutlout replied casually. He gave a whistle, and his Monstrous Nightmare, Hookfang emerged, alight with flames dancing around his body. Many men gave startled cries, trying to stay clear from the fire. Some tried to attack the beast, but any chains or weapons thrown were melted into puddles of black or silver sludge.

'No, NO! Get back here, get back!' Einar cried, his throat grew increasingly hoarse as he shrieked and tried to reach the Monstrous Nightmare and retrieve his prisoners without getting burnt, but to no avail. Once Hookfang was up in the air, Stormfly appeared and Astrid switched dragons with a careless ease. He looked at the pitiful remains of the charred rope - some soldiers were throwing buckets of sea water at the burning mast Astrid and Snotlout had been tied to. He gave a low, frustrated growl and smashed his fist against the side of the ship.

'Agh! I'll get those dragons, if it is the _last_ thing I do!' He called at the two people and their companions who were flying away from the scene.

'Wow, that was a close one,' Snotlout breathed as he and Astrid joined the others.

'So, what was going on down there?' Ruffnut asked, sharing a glance with her brother. The ships in the ocean were slowly turning into specs that would later be unseeable to the group of friends.

'We - we have to tell Hiccup what's going on! We need to tell him, oh god.' Astrid gasped, swallowing the air as she tried to catch her breath.

'Wait, what's going on?!' Fishlegs cried in distress as he flew with his Gronckle, Meatlug in distress - did he space out again? Was everyone else bar Astrid and Snotlout as uninformed as he was?

'Einar, and his allies...uh, don't know their names - but they want to attack Berk and take the dragons for themselves!' Astrid summarized, shocking her companions. Everybody fell silent, unable to put their thoughts into words.

After a long, awkward while Tuffnut asked, 'so, whadd're we gonna do now?' Tuffnut asked, looking at Astrid with everyone else. She gave a sigh, and said,

'Well, I guess we just...head back to Berk and warn everyone about what's coming.'

'Okay, so have you got - like, a map of your homelands or anything?' Hiccup asked his sister, Merida who gave a roll of her his behind his back whilst he rummaged around the desk of his room. Strange, she'd never actually been inside his bedroom before, it was kind of cool. Merida couldn't do much to her bedroom back home, since she'd only been given ladylike things, except for her bow and arrow of course - the old one was still at home.

'Do you think I had time to grab a map amongst other things, when I had a vengeful would have been father in law out to kill me? I barely escaped as it was. Going back into the castle to fetch my things woul've been a death trap.' Merida replied to the question, stepping towards the desk she went to pick up and observe random trinkets her sibling had invented.

'Uh...sorry.' Hiccup coughed awkwardly in response, his eyes drawn to the many scars and healing bruises littering Merida's once perfectly fair and freckled skin. 'What was it like, living in DunBroch?' He asked, trying to rid the tension between the pair. He opened another draw, and sighed when yet again he could not find the thing he was looking for.

'Well...it's - sorry if I sound...rude? But I guess it's a tad more advanced than this place.' Merida answered, giving Hiccup an awkward grin.

'What? Oh, no it's fine. Berkians tend to be more rough' n tough, and they're kind of more a brawn over brain kind of society,' Hiccup assured, remembering how he never did fit in with the others until he proved himself, because he was too small and had a more inventive streak than anything else.

'Same with DunBroch. I was sick as a child a lot - I mean, I couldn't even pull back a bow and arrow when I first tried. I was a tomboy, and people expected me to be a prim and proper lady, it sort of just frustrated me,' Merida explained and sat herself on the edge of Hiccup's bed. He stopped searching for whatever it was he'd been looking for, and adjusted the wooden chair behind his desk so he could face her when she spoke. 'So I never really fitted in where I was from. I had a lot of suitors as I grew up. They were interested at first because of my title and...I guess when mother forced me into the corsets and stuff they thought I was kind of good looking. But, I guess I just kind of scare them off with my personality,' Merida shrugged absent mindedly.

The marriage rejections chipped away at Merida's confidence, and she wondered whether she'd ever marry someone she could love - or even grow to love. Sure Merida was never one for marriage, but since she was a girl she couldn't claim her father's throne, which would be passed to the eldest of her triplet brothers, Hamish most likely.

'But, you said you were in a wedding?' Hiccup asked, furrowing his brows.

'I didn't exactly love Douglas, the guy I was going to marry. But no

matter how many times mother says I can take as long as I want with this whole marriage business...I know it's just going to catch up on me. So I went along with the betrothal and pent up my misery. I didn't notice how depressed I was with the situation until, until I realized I had a way out. Which was finding you guys,' Merida revealed with a small, awkward smile.

'So, that's why you came to Berk? I mean, I don't blame you, it doesn't sound like the life you'd choose...back in DunBroch. You know, you don't have to marry anyone if you don't want to, here.' Hiccup hesitated several times as he spoke, wondering how to word his muddled thoughts. He had a brooding look about him, which mostly occurred when Hiccup was thinking up a new contraption or sketch to draw. This felt way too much like girl talk. Shouldn't his sister be talking to...his mother about these things? He felt a bit strange, but then again, he never had a sibling before - maybe they did talk about personal stuff? Maybe this was normal.

'I feel...lonely. Nothing against you and Valka - I mean, mother I suppose? But I kind of want someone that's like a kindred spirit, someone to settle down with that I get along with. Douglas might have been that person, but it felt dull. There was never a spark,' Merida tried explaining, wondering whether Hiccup could imagine her situation.

'Astrid actually hated me for ages, y'know? If you'd told me almost six years ago that we were going to get hitched, I'd have had a good laugh,' Hiccup looked kind of amused, and Merida gave a snort as she recalled his aggressive 'sweetheart'. Ha.

'Well, nice...talking to you?' Merida ended the conversation and lifted herself from where she'd been sitting and walked to the door.

'Sure.' Hiccup mumbled before he was left to his own devices.

****Responses to Reviews****

****Allison daughter of apollo:****__ They'll be finding out soon, don't you worry! In a few chapters, I'm guessing? I've written the story plot down. but not what events happen in which chapters

—

****Aisling66:****__ Thank you! The creator of the cover made two drafts based on what I said I wanted on it, but I couldn't decide which one was better - so I asked her to bring in elements from both covers into it. It took a while, but when she finished it I fell in love. Ha ha, I could not stop staring in awe at it. It's saved on my computer and in my FanFiction account. What do you like about the cover, and did you enjoy this chapter? :) _

****Apocalypse Owner:****__ Agreed! I hate mundane, predictable stories so I put little and big plot twists that I had in mind. And like I said, making those characters sisters kind of popped into my head as I was doing further research to include things into the plot, even though I have the whole story drafted. Yeah, she got accepted, but it might not be for long. ;) You can find out why very soon. :p

—

rinxlenfan4ever: Thank you for the enthusiasm! I love it when little comments like that show up, along with constructive criticism. :) What drew you to the story, and what do you like about it? Again, thanks for the review. :D_

Mari Vargas: That's what got me into writing the story originally! I was banging my head against the keyboard every time I saw an 'arranged marriage' or 'Big Four at Hogwarts' story show up on the screen. Plus, the stories were riddled with Merricup clichés so I thought HA, why not make them related? Mwahahahahahaha. I'm a genius. :p _

Wow, forget I said that - spur of the moment thing. But yeah, you read my mind. That's exactly what I was trying to convey. :)_

13. Test Drive

Author's Note: I had exams, so this story was on hold for a while - so sorry to have kept you guys waiting! Hopefully this chapter will make up for it. I've got a little flashback added in there too! :)_

Disclaimer: I do not own the movie Brave, nor do I own the How To Train Your Dragon movies and book series. Those rights go to Disney Pixar, DreamWorks and the amazing Cressida Cowell. _

* * *

<p>Chapter 13: Test Drive _

* * *

<p>'It's too early!' Merida complained, never having liked waking up in the morning - she didn't have much of a choice during those months in the wilderness, where her back ached every second of each day and the sun blinded her awake. Now that she was actually in a bed of her own, she had no desire to rise from beneath the comfort of the if not rough but warm sheets and the furs her biological mother had piled over her. Could she ever catch a break?<p>

'Merida, this is the family who raised you we're talking about. You need to face the consequences - run towards responsibility, not away from it.' Valka prodded, causing the previously grumpy girl to swing her legs off the bed she'd been sleeping in. Merida scampered towards the breeches and travelling shirt her mother had draped across a nearby chair and inched her feet into her snug boots.

'Yes, yes...needed a bit of sinking in. Let's pack our food supplies and get the hell outta here,' Merida urged, not waiting for a response from Valka as she clambered down the staircase and met Hiccup in the pantry. 'Okay, I'll just pack up all of this.' She muttered, ducking underneath hanging pieces of preserved meat. A few candles were their only source of light, so Merida had to squint into some parts of the room and needed a proper look as she rummaged through drawers.

She collected a block of cheese that had been wrapped in leaves, kept underneath a bowl so no rodents could get at it. Merida spied her older brother in the corner of her eye collecting produce

too.

'Okay, so I've told everybody that we're going away to find survivors from your homeland. It's a good enough excuse and I explained to the elders that it is Berk's duty to help our neighbours. I implied that your family were Vikings,' Hiccup revealed his cover story, which sounded good enough for Merida. She gave him a firm nod of approval and swivelled her head around when they heard Valka enter.

'Alright, so I brought Shelby inside to make it less awkward. We shouldn't have to waste time going all the way to the arena whilst at the same time, trying not to get caught and found flying to a different direction than the route we gave to the elders. The dragons are waiting in the barn and we'll fly away from that direction. Merida, you will be sticking in between both Hiccup and I - you've claimed Shelby as your own dragon but we don't know how obedient she is during flight, and you've never flown a dragon before. Just think of it as being the same as riding a horse,' Valka soothed as she saw Merida frown, nervous at the thought of flying for the first time in her life. She'd climbed the Firefalls, done her archery whilst riding a horse at the same time, but never had she _flown. _

'Right, let's go. I know where Scotland is and I've flown with Toothless over there a couple of times, but I've never gone below the cloud coverage during daytime for obvious reasons. I've got the general area covered, but we need to figure out a plan on how to track down the DunBroch royal family. We need to get information when we arrive without giving away our identities. So Merida, you need to tie your hair back and wear this cloak so you're less easy to spot from afar,' Hiccup reasoned, throwing a dark green cloak at his younger sister roughly but not unkindly. The group slung the straps of their foodpacks across their shoulders and mounted the dragons once the trio entered the barn and had the back doors opened.

It took a while considering how much hair there was on Merida's head, plus there was also its untamable unruliness to consider. Despite looking a bit odd with her hair tied back into a lump, Merida lowered her hood over her hair as was suggested and inched onto Shelby's back so as not to startle her. When the dragon had begun to walk outside, Merida tried calming her nerves by remembering her first time riding a horse...

'Papa, he's so huge!' Merida exclaimed once she and the King reached the castle's stables. It had been a year since Merida was told that she'd be able to ride a horse. Her father had let her bond with Angus, who had grown from a foal to quite a large shire horse - and Merida noted that he was far bigger than the other two young stallions who were the same age but different breeds.

_'And he'll only get bigger. Listen sweetheart, you said you wanted to learn how to ride a horse. Well, you've got your own now.' Fergus reminded, lifting a squealing Merida from the ground and on top of a young Angus. Merida wasn't one to be frightened so easily, but it was something about this majestic, inky black beast that unnerved the usually brave little girl. She didn't like behaving as other stupid princesses did, playing with their dolls or learning how to do useless needlework. Merida was growing stronger and healthier now since she'd been very small, so Fergus relented and allowed the preteen ten year old to ride a horse. _

_'I, I know I said that father. But what if I fall? What if my brain gets smushed under its hooves? I don't want to risk it,' Merida pressed, hoping that her father would change his mind. She shook as she tried to keep herself upright on the skitterish steed, noting that Angus really seemed to want out of his stable. The poor thing was cooped up a lot in here. If it was her mother in this situation, Queen Elinor would have been happy to take Merida back inside for her lessons. But this was a day off, and her father wanted her to ride a horse just as she'd asked the year before. _

_'Well then, we might as well lock you up in an empty cell then. Walking down the stairs is just as dangerous as riding a horse, Merida. You could trip and easily 'smush' your head on anything. What is life without a little risk?' Fergus urged, hoping to ease his adoptive wild-child into this situation. Usually, lord fathers in his situation would never dream of letting their daughters do anything at all like this - but to Fergus, Merida's nature was a breath of fresh air in his life, and he wasn't about to snuff out her Viking side just so she could become the highland lady his wife always dreamed of raising. _

_'A-alright then,' the gangly red-head relented, shoulders slumping as she sat on her noble steed. Fergus, rolling his eyes at her posture informed; _

_'Unless you really do want to fall off your horse, darlin', I suggest that you straighten your posture to make keeping you on his back easier for Angus here. Thas' it.' Fergus advised, leading the reins towards a paddock outside the castle walls, giving pointers to Merida along the way as Angus galloped towards the empty space. Usually, knights practiced here but training had not started yet - so Fergus had an hour or two to help freckled little Merida to ease herself into the activity. _

_'There, see? You're a natural. You're happy now, are you darling?' Fergus praised as Angus sped into a little trot as Merida quickly adjusted to the horse. She was sporting a wide, genuine smile of triumph. The girl nodded enthusiastically and whooped as she did rounds about the paddock. _

* * *

><p>Merida despaired a bit at the thought of her adoptive father, thinking him to be either dead with his head on a pike or rotting away in some god forsaken dungeon - held captive by the Macintosh clan. In her spur of the moment desire for freedom, she once more forgot her duty to her family and abandoned all. She'd been so angry, so confused - never thinking of the consequences yet again. Well, I certainly still haven't learnt to think before I act, she mused in distaste.

She convinced herself that she had gotten better at it, but was still rusty on the most part - she'd only just about mastered it when she had to survive under the scrutiny and deserved mistrust of her Viking brethren and wondered when she'd discard the necessity. Probably soon, or when she would very likely screw up yet again.

It wasn't too bad, she supposed - riding a dragon. Merida felt her heart thrum against her chest and wondered whether it would pop out and back in again by the rate it was going. She tried to calm herself

with memories of times with Angus yet again, and it did help despite her grief over her missing horse. Shelby was surprisingly tame whilst flying and Merida supposed that it was due to feeling comfortable with her rider.

'How're you handling your Timberjack, lil' sis?' Hiccup asked playfully, flashing a grin at his sibling. The Viking made sure to keep a safe distance from Shebly's razor sharp wings and flew above Merida's head, looking down as he did so. 'What's on your mind?' He asked, smile falling as he registered Merida's distant expression.

'Just thinking about home. Everybody in Scotland,' She sighed, revealing her inner turmoil. 'I messed up. Now I have to fix what's been broken.' She declared, steeling herself as she shook her head and came back to focusing on her journey to DunBroch.

Mend the bond, she thought in sudden remembrance of the witch's long-ago advice all those years ago.

* * *

><p>'Hiccup? Hiccup!' Astrid called as she dismounted from Stormfly, calling for her beau the chief to greet her. It was early morning now and she was wondering where the dragon master was.<p>

'Astrid, yer' back!' Gobber called, hobbling over to the group of dragon riders who'd just recently landed on Berk. 'How was the scouting?' He asked amiably, leading the group to his workshop where the dragon gear was maintained. He collected saddles, reins and other riding pieces as everybody walked inside.

'Gobber, I need to find him. Where's Hiccup? Is he at a meeting, where?' She asked, panting as she sprinted towards the blacksmith. Her eyes roamed the thatched houses and crowds of Vikings and their flying companions who were starting their day. She couldn't spot her fiancée or Toothless anywhere.

'Hiccup? Aye, ya' won't find him anywhere. Gone off ter help Merida find her surviving kin. She needs stability or somethin', he said so. Flew off with his mother and ward this morning.' He informed to a wide-eyed Astrid. She followed him to a nearby moulding pot and put a desperate hand on his arm.

'Gobber, I think I know where he's going. This can't wait - I have to find him and quick. The others will tell you,' Astrid informed in a cryptic fashion as she saddled up on Stormfly and once again flew towards the skies.

* * *

><p>Response to Reviews

_rinxlenfan4ever: Yep, that's exactly what I'm going for. The only thing close to a story where Hiccup and Merida are related and not romantically involved is this one piece - I can't remember the name of it, but it was one where Fergus and Stoic were brothers. It was a good premise, but it seemed strange how easily everybody got along and the whole thing seemed unrealistic. So out of frustration at the lack of sibling/family stories I made one and voila, this was the

result. _

_Aisling66: Thank you! The artist who did this is so nice and good at what she does. I was so pleased when she showed me the cover, honestly! It's cool seeing an original piece based on your own writing. ^^ _

_InTheLittleBun: The second chapter is one of my favourites! It's just an unique way of showing a first meeting between them - I always see Merida pointing a bow at Hiccup in like, every single story - so I thought I'd give this spin on it. _

Conman4372173: Soooooo sorry to have kept you waiting for so long! I kind of just lost inspiration during my exams, but then once they were finished and I relaxed for a bit I went right back to writing this. Hope this chapter makes up for the wait! :D

_Brigantedescent: Sorry! Really sorry! *avoids mob* I had to focus on my exams so I kind of abandoned this for a few months. But no worries, I'm back! *flings arms wide open* I'm back. *grins* _

14. Author's Note

****STASIS:**** _Merida is preparing to marry Douglas Macintosh, but as she waits for the ceremony in her own changing room she discovers a letter which reveals her true identity as the daughter of a Viking Chieftain. _

TRIGGER:

THE QUEST:

SURPRISE:

CRITICAL CHOICE:

CLIMAX:

REVERSAL:

RESOLUTION:

End
file.